This short act of worship has been produced for you by Revd Papa Owusu.

If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church and pray for them as they pray for you.

Welcome to our act of worship this morning on the Fifth Sunday after Trinity

**Call to Worship**

The greatness and power of God

are such a contrast to our weakness –

yet, our God loves us.

The holiness and goodness of God

are such a contrast to our sinful nature –

yet, our God loves us.

Come, offer your praise and thanksgiving,

and give glory and honour to our God.

**Hymn: Lord, I come before Your throne of grace (Singing the Faith 58)**

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bekyy2PG1Cc>

Lord, I come before Your throne of grace:

I find rest in your presence

and fulness of joy.

In worship and wonder

I behold your face,

singing what a faithful God have I.

*What a faithful God have I,*

*what a faithful God.*

*What a faithful God have I,*

*faithful in every way.*

Lord of mercy, you have heard my cry;

through the storm you're the beacon,

my song in the night.

In the shelter of your wings,

hear my heart's reply,

singing what a faithful God have I.

*What a faithful God have I,*

*what a faithful God.*

*What a faithful God have I,*

*faithful in every way.*

Lord all sovereign, granting peace from heaven,

let me comfort those who suffer

with the comfort you have given.

I will tell of your great love for as long as I live,

singing what a faithful God have I.

*What a faithful God have I,*

*what a faithful God.*

*What a faithful God have I,*

*faithful in every way. Robert Critchley (b. 1959) and Dawn Critchley (b. 1965) ©1989, Thank You Music*

**Prayer**

*Let us pray*

Loving God, all-sufficient one,

we acknowledge your presence, and we worship you

We worship you, Lord Jesus Christ, holy and anointed one.

You laid your life down that we might live.

O God, all-sufficient one,

we give you thanks and praise that you are all we need.

Surprising God,

We confess before you now that we are a lost and wandering people, distracted by the world around us and easily diverted from how you call us to live. We are quick to anger and slow to forgive; we are quick to judge and slow to accept; we are quick to doubt and slow to understand. All too often we place barriers in the way of seeing you in the world and shun opportunities to share you with the world.

We pray to you now for support and compassion: that we may always, however tentatively, proclaim the joy and hope of your promise to us — that we are forgiven. We gratefully affirm that your love will always welcome us, comfort us and heal us.

We welcome your authority and influence in our lives, Holy Spirit.

You intercede for us when we have no strength.

You are with us and guide us in our weakness.

Be with us now in this time of worship and help us accept you into our lives, as you will always accept us. **Amen**

**Today’s reading: Mark 6:1-13 (NRSVA)**

**The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth**

He left that place and came to his home town, and his disciples followed him. 2 On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, ‘Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?’ And they took offence at him. 4 Then Jesus said to them, ‘Prophets are not without honour, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.’ 5 And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. 6 And he was amazed at their unbelief.

**The Mission of the Twelve**

Then he went about among the villages teaching. 7 He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. 8 He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; 9 but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. 10 He said to them, ‘Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. 11 If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.’ 12 So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. 13 They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

**Hymn: Lord of all hopefulness (Singing the Faith 526)**

*Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNlLEl8rkSA>

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,

whose trust, ever childlike, no cares could destroy,

be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,

your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,

whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,

Be there at our labours, and give us, we pray,

your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.

Lord of all kindliness, Lord of all grace,

your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace.

be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,

your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,

whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,

be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,

your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

*Jan Struther (Joyce Placzek) (1901-1953)*

 *©From enlarged Songs of Praise, 1931, OUP*

**Time to Reflect**

In our Gospel story, as we heard from St Mark, Jesus returned to his hometown, in the Galilean hill country where he grew up. In the Synagogue, the people were amazed at his profound teachings and wisdom. Still, they struggled with his identity because they did not understand why such a commoner – the carpenter, Mary's son – could have such skill in wisdom and power. The locals could not cope with him and thus, 'took offence at him.' (v3)

Here, in his hometown, Jesus is rejected; and in the next episode of the story, as he sends his disciples out, he warns them at the outset that they will face rejection too.

As per the Gospel reading from St Mark, the disciples were not supposed to take anything with them when they were sent out. They were to carry out this mission almost as material beggars: no bread, no bag, no money, no second tunic, no boots, only sandals – in other words, none of the resources that would make them independent of the people they are going to visit.

The disciples were sent into the heart of the village to stay with the local people. They were to hear their stories and their concerns and speak to them in a direct and personal way about the good news of the kingdom of God, rather than delivering a

pre-packaged message.

The apostles would need nothing to enable them to do their work. They were to make themselves vulnerable and only to trust in God's grace and depend on the Holy Spirit. That may well mean that they needed no spares, no backup plan, just a reliance on God's provision.

As Jesus continued with his mission regardless of opposition in his hometown, the locals' unbelief, and stubborn resistance to an experience that could have been life-changing, the disciples were also sent to people who might reject and persecute them, and **they went without question.**

As Jesus sent his disciples, equipped by the Holy Spirit to do all the things that their master Jesus did, we too are being called to have compassion and go to those sheep 'without a shepherd.'

By today's ultra-cautious values, Jesus' instructions to his disciples appeared highhanded at best and irresponsible at worst. In our risk-averse society, we all like our comfort and security, but it is in these times that we are chosen and commissioned to be the light to all the world. Are we ready to move out of the safety zone, as these disciples had to do? Are we willing to move away from spectatorship to active participants of God's mission?

The notion of being vulnerable and out of one's comfort zone is

 never a cosy experience, but it is often during those times that we are most receptive to God and his plans for our lives. Are you ready? Are you willing?

We are in strange and perplexing times and being pulled in different directions. We are still being weighed down with worry, fear and anxiety and we are not sure what to do next and even though resources are being pulled together from all corners with incredible speed and persistence to deal with the situation, we still seem to find ourselves in a place of hopelessness because of the novel virus which keeps mutating in different ways.

We find ourselves in helpless situations caused by civil unrests, lives being overtaken by fear and brutality, people being crippled with fear and grief because of who they are. It is in the light of these ambiguities that we are being called into **relationship with God** – as **God’s special people, chosen and commissioned to be the light of and to the world.** Are you ready? Are you willing?

As I bring my reflection to an end, I would like us to ponder on the words of Jacqueline G Jones:

Have you heard God's voice; has your heart been stirred?

Are you still prepared to follow?

Have you made a choice to remain and serve,

though the way be rough and narrow?

Will you use your voice; will you not sit down

when the multitudes are silent?

Will you make a choice to stand your ground

when the crowds are turning violent?

In your city streets, will you be God's heart?

Will you listen to the voiceless?

Will you stop and eat, and when friendships start,

will you share your faith with the faithless?

Will you watch the news with the eyes of faith

and believe it could be different?

Will you share your views using words of grace?

Will you leave a thoughtful imprint?

*We will walk the path that will cost us much*

*and embrace God's love and sorrow?*

*We will trust in One who entrusts to you*

*the disciples of tomorrow.*

**A time of prayer (trusting that others pray with us)**

Lord, just as you sent out your disciples of old to share the Gospel, we pray today for all people who serve in the field of mission, at home or abroad. For all those in ministry and leadership within the church. For all those making themselves vulnerable by sharing of you.

**Merciful God sufficient, we lift our prayers before you.
Strengthen and protect your people sharing the Gospel.**

We pray for the conflicts and tensions raging throughout the world – hatred, bombings, corruption. We pray for all those caught up in such situations. And for the people working to bring about reconciliation.

**Merciful God sufficient, we lift our prayers before you.
Diffuse hatred and bring peace to the world.**

We pray for all countries struggling to cope with the pandemic due to lack of resources and vaccines. For India coping with another epidemic. For those everywhere who are sick; be it in mind or body. For those who put their own lives at risk to help save others. For the bereaved.

**Merciful God sufficient, we lift our prayers before you.
Restore health, comfort, and console.**

We pray for those in our community who may have lost their jobs due to the pandemic or have been furloughed and are worrying about rent arrears. Or their future, as furlough begins to wind down. For all those living on the streets with only a cardboard roof over their heads.

**Merciful God sufficient, we lift our prayers before you.
Bring reassurance; transform lives.**

When the disciples were sent out, they were instructed to take no food with them. We pray for all people who live each day not knowing where their next meal is coming from. For all those who rely on aid or food banks to put a meal on the table.

**Merciful God sufficient, we lift our prayers before you.
Feed and nourish those in need.**

Lord, in you we have freedom. We pray for our Prime Minister, the government, and all advisors as they deliberate on lifting restrictions as we head to what society has dubbed ‘Freedom Day’.

**Merciful God sufficient, we lift our prayers before you.
Give wisdom and guidance in all things.
May all people know true freedom in you.
Amen.**

**The Lord’s Prayer**

Let us pray the prayer that the Lord Jesus taught his disciples and us.

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,**

**your kingdom come, your will be done,**

**on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours**

**now and for ever. Amen.**

**Hymn: Will you come and follow me (Singing the Faith 673)** *Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zk6IUalJ3sk>

Will you come and follow me

if I but call your name?

Will you go where you don’t know

and never be the same?

Will you let my love be shown,

will you let my name be known,

will you let my life be grown

in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind

if I but call your name?

Will you care for cruel and kind

and never be the same?

Will you risk the hostile stare

should your life attract or scare,

will you let me answer prayer

in you and you in me?

Will you love the ‘you’ you hide

if I but call your name?

Will you quell the fear inside

and never be the same?

Will you use the faith you’ve found

to reshape the world around

through my sight and touch and sound

in you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true

when you but call my name.

Let me turn and follow you

and never be the same.

In your company I’ll go

where your love and footsteps show.

Thus I’ll move and live and grow

in you and you in me.

 *John L. Bell (b. 1949) and Graham Maule (b. 1958) ©1987, WGRG, Iona Community, Glasgow*

**Blessing**

Go forward this day: Ready to find God in the world, in small and surprising places. Willing to see God at work, in intriguing and unexpected ways. Eager to serve God in the world, where you are, as you are, and as God calls you to love.

The blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit be with you now and remain with you always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**In the name of Christ. Amen**

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