

## MRBC Sunday Service

### 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2021

Welcome, Notices, Birthday Box

We live in a world that currently has many challenges as our society has changed over the last 18 months and we are going to pray about some big issues that have arisen in just the last few weeks a little later on.

Our sermon this morning is by Graeme Ross, our Regional Minister and he is going to talk about how we cope with the change that the big issues over Covid, lockdown and the like have brought for churches and the challenges that change might bring. He's going to emphasise that there is a harvest out there if we are prepared to cast our nets in the right places.

Let's start first of all giving thanks for a God who never changes, however our world changes around us, so that we can always rely on His love and care. We'll give Him the glory as we open with these words.

*In Christ, the God of heaven has made his home on earth.*

**Christ dwells among us and is one with us.**

*Highest of all creation, he lives among the least.*

**He journeys with the rejected and welcomes the weary.**

*Come now, all who thirst, and drink of the water of life.*

**Come now, all who hunger, and be filled with good things.**

*Come now, all who seek,*

**and encounter the abundant love of the almighty God.**

9 All hail the power of Jesus' name *(6 verses to the tune Diadem)*

#### **Prayer**

Our Father, we thank you for this opportunity to come before You to worship this morning. We see your glory in the heavens and in this beautiful coastal place we see your beauty and power come together. We thank You because you have shown Your love to us in Jesus, in His death and resurrection and we thank you that we have been able to praise His holy name as we think of Him in His glory – a glory that you have promised each of us who know You.

As we look at our world and the mess we as a human race are making of it, may you inspire us to pray for our generation, that like us, they may find hope and forgiveness in Jesus. As Your witnesses may we be truly Good News to this broken world. Help us to speak out to those that don't know You in ways that will connect and make a difference.

We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen

124 Give thanks with a grateful heart (x2)

1025 The King of Love is my delight

## Prayer for Afghanistan

In the past week we have all looked with concern at pictures coming from Afghanistan as the Taliban have taken over the country again as western countries have withdrawn their forces. It has massive implications for many in that land, including the small Afghan Christian community, which already faces severe persecution. As with all these big events, how do we pray into this situation? Here's some helpful advice from Pete Greig. He gives us some insights from a from someone whose organisation needs to remain anonymous for obvious reasons:

"The fear for the Afghan people is not so much the unknown, but rather the known: a brutal regime where daily life is filled with unbearable tension: regular public executions, oppression for women, fear of a knock at the door from the Taliban.

For too long people in Afghanistan have looked for salvation from Western powers. Well that hasn't worked. It's failed spectacularly. We need our brothers and sisters in the global church to take spiritual responsibility and stand with us in prayer. "

Let's lift our prayers urgently to heaven for:

1. The Afghan church. Protection, peace and courage for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are understandably terrified. Let's pray that they experience the Lord walking with them and among them, saying: "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32)
2. Political and humanitarian solutions for the vast number of Afghan refugees, ordinary people suddenly displaced from their homes by the terror the Taliban. May they discover that "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knows those who take refuge in Him." (Nahum 1:7)
3. Wisdom for world leaders as they seek to respond diplomatically, building an essential international consensus for peace. "Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have insight, I have power. By me kings reign and rulers issue decrees that are just;"(Proverbs 8:14-15)

We will cover all of these in this prayer, so let's pray:

*Father, today we pray for Afghanistan.*

*In recent days we have witnessed the withdrawal of Western forces and the paramilitary overthrow of the country's government by the Taliban.*

*We are deeply concerned about this unfolding situation and the consequences for the women, men and children living there.*

*Lord, You hear the cries and see the tears of those formed in Your own image.*

*We know that politics, diplomacy and international laws have an important part to play in creating and maintaining peace and stability. We pray for wisdom for international leaders in this moment.*

Lord in Your mercy

***Hear our prayer***

*However, we also see starkly the limits of such endeavours. Human efforts alone cannot compel love of neighbour, let alone enemy; rather this is the transformational territory of Your word and Spirit.*

*So would You move Your hand to change the hearts and minds of the oppressors even now?  
Withhold evil and cultivate good, banish darkness and bring forth light.*

Lord in Your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

*We declare Your nearness over those who have been abused and displaced, violated and  
oppressed. Would You open their ears and eyes to Your presence?*

*We pray for Your church there. Would You comfort and strengthen, protect and bless our sisters  
and brothers? As persecution draws close, would You draw closer still?*

Lord in Your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

*Teach us how to respond as we place our hope in You and Your good and just plans for Your  
creation.*

Lord in Your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

*For the sake of Your Son our Lord Jesus Christ*

**Amen** (Source: EA)

## **Prayer for Haiti**

One of the weaknesses of international media is that big stories can bury other really important news stories and this happened in the last week by ignoring a major tragedy in one of the world's poorest nations.

On 14<sup>th</sup> August the country of Haiti was hit by an earthquake of magnitude 7.5. Haiti is the poorest country in the Americas and people live in weakly built structures and has suffered devastating earthquakes before, the last being of magnitude 7.0 in 2010, which killed about 160,000 people and caused billions of dollars worth of damage and the country hasn't really got over it yet. The earthquake struck just six-weeks after the murder of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse, and six year after destruction caused by Hurricane Matthew. Haitians fear this tragedy will further exacerbate medical shortages affecting the nation that also faces one of the worst outbreaks of COVID-19 in the western hemisphere. Things are a mess and is a major tragedy unfolding. Here's a short video from Tearfund made about 5 days ago.

VIDEO

The death toll has now risen over 2000 but it is believed that there will be more casualties than this, although the area affected was much more rural this time. Most governmental help is coming from other American countries but international charities like Tearfund are also involved in the rescue effort. I've given more details on our website as well as information on how to donate. Amid such need, we call upon God who is our healer.

*Heavenly Father, so much pain has befallen the country of Haiti. We know that you are both a God of mercy and a God of justice. We ask that you be present in this situation. We lift up to you the families who have lost loved ones and friends to the earthquake. We pray for the first responders and for those who search for survivors in the aftermath. May the men, women, children, and elderly affected by this earthquake receive comfort, peace, and healing from you.*

Lord in Your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

*Lord, whenever a tragic situation befalls a nation, it can often take a while for all the details to unfold. We pray that those who are facing uncertainty now may cling to you. We can only imagine the fear that many of my brothers and sisters in Christ are feeling in Haiti right now. They may be listening closely to the radio to the news for updates and are likely lifting up prayers to you know for comfort and guidance. Please bring them peace in the uncertainty. Remind them that you are always with them, even in the darkest valley. Show us how we can be of aid to our brothers and sisters in Haiti, not only through our prayers, but through our actions as well.*

Lord in Your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

*Lord, we pray for the Government of Haiti at this time as they mourn the murder of their President. Give them strength as they have to come to grips with the consequence of the earthquake. We pray for the international aid effort, that resources may be provided quickly to help survivors, support the health services and to provide shelter. We pray for Tearfund and other Christian agencies, that they may show the light and love of Jesus in their actions.*

Lord in Your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

*Lord Jesus, make Haiti new, a land where Gospel seeds are planted and godly fruit grows into an abundant harvest. And make us new, each and every day of our lives, so that we will abide in You, for Your glory and our joy.*

*We ask this in Jesus name,*

**Amen.** (Source: Crosswalk)

## **Town Pastors**

A few weeks ago we prayed for Felixstowe Town Pastors who took part in Festival Pastors at the Latitude Festival. They report that they were able to assist over 800 people during the event in Suffolk and want to thank those who prayed for their work. Please also pray for FTP as they look to resume patrols next month and as they look for a new paid Co-ordinator and for volunteers to be town pastors and for new prayer team. The hours will be changing too probably between 6-30pm and 11-30pm on Saturdays.

*Father, we thank you for Town Pastors and for the impact that they had at Latitude this year. We pray that conversations held and prayers prayed may result in changed lives. We pray now that you will raise up pastors and prayer team as Town Pastors recommence here in Felixstowe. May you continue to bring glory to this ministry which has touched lives since it first started 11 years ago.*

*We ask this in Jesus' name*

**Amen.**

Finally, let's take a time of quiet to remember before the Lord those that need our prayers at the present time.

Personal prayers

*Father we lift each person before You this morning. Touch them, heal them, encourage them challenge them we pray.*

*In Jesus' name. Amen*

Song Meld: Lord You've been good to me/This is amazing grace

Reading: John 21:1-14

Sermon: Graeme Ross (video) – sorry, no transcript available

2604 Water You turned into wine

Blessing

### For reflection and discussion

*Read John 21:1-14*

1. Would you like to have been one of Jesus' first disciples? Why or why not?
2. Graeme talks about some portrayals of the Christian faith as easy and joy-filled. Has that been true for you? We know that in the Bible, the disciples faced all sorts of problems and difficulties? But how many of our problems have come through trying to serve God, or have they been a result of our own actions?
3. Look at verses 1 to 3. Some of the disciples were experienced fishermen but found what they were doing was fruitless even though they had fished for years. Graeme talks about the way in which we have "done" church the same way over the years but may seem fruitless in our labours? How do you think we may be "stuck in our ways" and not connecting with those who don't know Jesus?
4. Make disciples or attend services? What is our primary goal as church?
5. Read verses 5-6. How may we "cast our nets on the other side" at MRBC? What sorts of things are connecting with people we know and bringing them to faith?
6. How willing are we to be led by God into doing new things at MRBC as we come out of the pandemic?