



**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2020**

Notes from our Sunday Morning  
Pre-recorded Worship

# Opening Prayer

God, we thank you so much that you love us just as we are, that we come to you from wherever we are, Lord, sitting in our lounge, wherever we might be, God, and wherever we are in ourselves, God, in our spirit, or how we feel. You love us just there, and you want to meet with us today. So we thank you that you're with us. May your Holy Spirit, the bringer of all comfort and peace, be upon each one of us, God, as we gather today, and may we hear from you, God, that still, small voice of love, of promise, of faithfulness, God. May you encourage our hearts today, and may you show us something new of yourself. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Extracts from Psalm 42.

"As the deer pants for streams of water, "so my soul pants for you, oh God. "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. "Where can I go and meet with God? "Why are you downcast, oh my soul? "Why so disturbed within me? "Put your hope in God, "for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God. "Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls. "All your waves and breakers have swept over me. "By day the Lord directs his love. "At night his song is with me, "a prayer to the God of my life. "Why are you downcast, oh my soul? "Why so disturbed within me? "Put your hope in God, "for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God."

My prayer is that we will be able to put our hope in God. Everything and all the things of struggle that anyone is going through right now are completely understandable, but God is still there for you. He is still your anchor, and he will not let you down.

## Song

### Way Maker

#### Verse 1

You are here moving in our midst  
I worship You I worship You  
You are here working in this place  
I worship You I worship You

#### Chorus

(You are) Way Maker Miracle Worker Promise Keeper  
Light in the darkness my God that is who You are

#### Verse 2

You are here touching ev'ry heart  
I worship You I worship You  
You are here healing ev'ry heart  
I worship You I worship You

#### Verse 3

You are here turning lives around  
I worship You I worship You  
You are here mending ev'ry heart  
I worship You yeah I worship You Lord

That is who You are  
That is who You are

That is who You are  
That is who You are

Bridge

Even when I don't see it You're working  
Even when I don't feel it You're working  
You never stop You never stop working  
You never stop You never stop working

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## Prayers

It's great to gather together to pray this morning and recognise that the God that we knew yesterday is the God that's with us today, the God that will be with us tomorrow, and he never changes, even though our circumstances change. So let us get together and just pray to God our Father.

Heavenly Father, we come before you this morning, Father, with hearts that are full of all sorts of feelings and emotions, Lord. We lay those things aside now as we come into your presence. Father, I want to thank you that you are the same today as you were before this Coronavirus hit this world, Father, that you haven't changed, that your love and your commitment to us is steadfast, and we thank you for that, Father God.

We thank you for your good gifts to us, that despite the difficult times we're in, we acknowledge that this world is a lovely world, that you've put us in places where we can actually be people who fulfil your plan for their lives, Father. We thank you that you have that perfect plan for each one of us, and that even though we've got these restrictions now, we thank you, Lord, that your plan hasn't changed for us. And so we come before you now with thankful hearts, and we bless you, Lord.

Lord, we do pray for our nation and for our world. Lord, we pray for the governmental leaders, for those in authority. We pray for wisdom for them at this time, that they will be knowing the way forward to reduce the effect of these lockdowns and shutdowns that are upon us, that Lord, we would get through this period as quickly as possible.

Lord, we pray for the scientists, for wisdom for them for how to tackle these diseases upon us at the moment. We pray for your church worldwide, and nationally in the UK, that we would be beacons of hope in this time, that we'll be able to respond to what your Holy Spirit is saying to us, and that we will be able to pick up those new things that we can carry forward once things get back to a degree of normality. Be with us, Holy Spirit, we pray.

Father, we long for normal to be with us again. But things have changed, and things won't be the same. Father, we really want to be people who are moving forward in the positive side of those changes, as a church. We want to take hold of the good and leave the bad behind. That's not just the Coronavirus bad, but it might be things that before seemed normal that now we realise are not perhaps so helpful. Lord, I think about our communities that we live in. We really do pray, for blessing now on your communities, the communities that you've placed us in. Lord, we want to be people of blessing. We want to be carriers of hope at this time for those people who are grieving, for those people who are lonely and feeling lost. Father, may your church be this church unleashed, this church

that is bringing hope, fresh hope, bringing comfort. We pray for our friends, our families, and our neighbours now in our communities, and we take a moment, and we pray, Father. We lift them to you.

Let's finish by saying the grace together. "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, "the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit "be with us all, now and evermore, amen."

## Reading: Luke 1 v 68 - 79

68 "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,  
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

69 He has raised up a horn[a] of salvation for us  
in the house of his servant David

70 (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),

71 salvation from our enemies  
and from the hand of all who hate us—

72 to show mercy to our ancestors  
and to remember his holy covenant,

73 the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

74 to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,  
and to enable us to serve him without fear

75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

76 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;  
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,

77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation  
through the forgiveness of their sins,

78 because of the tender mercy of our God,  
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven

79 to shine on those living in darkness  
and in the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the path of peace."

## Talk by Tim Radcliffe

### Part 1: Rescued by God

I want to start by asking us a question. What is your favourite rescue story? What is your favourite one, whether a film, a book?

If you are like me, you will love a great rescue story. I think my favourite, is the story of the Matrix, which is a film about a character was Neo. At the end of the film he discovers his true identity, taking on superpowers to save the world. A bit like Rey in the latest Star Wars trilogy - another great rescue story, as she learns the full might of her Jedi powers. But maybe more real to life, I've loved the story of Nelson Mandela, who was catalyst for so much change in South Africa.

Well, Israel had their own rescue story, and they remember it still is so fondly today. The story of the Exodus, where God led his people through Moses out of oppression in Egypt. When Jesus was born, Israel found themselves still under oppression. This time, under the Roman Empire, and longing for a

second Exodus, longing for a day when God would crush their enemies and bring them out of oppression. But we know that through the life of Jesus, God chooses to do it differently, this time 'round. He sent his Son to walk this earth with his people and he did some amazing things. He performed signs and wonders and taught in wonderful, weird, and mysterious ways. He kind of accumulated a mass gathering of people who started to believe that He was the Chosen One. God's Son, the Messiah.

But then, Jesus was betrayed. Just as it was all looking so good, he was betrayed. And he died a painful death on the cross. But Easter Sunday, we celebrated, didn't we, that this was not the end, that death did not have its sting. No, life conquered death, and Jesus was resurrected. He walked out of the tomb, and he reappeared to his disciples, and he said, yes, it is true. All that scripture long ago that told of the one like me, it is true - and it all made sense to the disciples. All that doubt, all that questioning, suddenly, they could see what it meant.

So, Luke penned this gospel, through the lens of resurrection life. He uniquely tells of of angelic appearances, the virgin conception and the work of the Spirit of God. And then we have this story of Zechariah and Elizabeth. An Angel has appeared to Zechariah and Elizabeth, who were barren and so without child, to tell them that they will have a Son. And his name will be John. We know that this child goes on to be John the Baptist. Just before Zechariah's song, John is born and taken to be circumcised on the eighth day. Zechariah, is I think moved by the Spirit and overcome with a sense of love, which leads him to sing the prophetic song.

We're going to now think about what these words mean? Who is being spoken of? You see, Luke wants to show even more wonder and delight at the story of Jesus.

So, if we pick it up in verse 68, it says, *"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, that he has come to his people, and he has redeemed them. He has raised up a horn of salvation out of the house of his servant David"*.

Who is this horn of salvation? Well, first off, "horn" means "king." Therefore, it can be read as a "a king of salvation," and he has come out of the house of the line of David.

Luke gave us a clue chapter 1 v 27, when he revealed that Joseph, who's the father of Jesus, is a descendant of David. So we can place Jesus right in that family and the person that Zechariah is referring to. But Luke wants us to understand the Jesus is the fulfilment of a prophecy long ago. There's a story in 2 Samuel 7, where the prophet Nathan prophesies over King David, and telling saying, *"One of your offspring will build my house, he will build God's house, and because of that, God will make his kingdom an everlasting kingdom."* So suddenly Luke is saying that here, Jesus is this horn/king of salvation. He is the one who will build the house of God. He is the one who God is going to make an everlasting kingdom for. He is the one who the prophets spoke of long ago.

It gets better. In the second line, it says that God came to his people and He redeemed them. Well, we know that it was through the life of Jesus that God chose to do redeem his people. But what does it mean? What does it mean to be redeemed? What do you think it means?

I think this kind of analogy is helpful. If I were to buy a car, I might not be able to afford to buy it outright, so I might put some money into it, and I might borrow some. I might take some money on credit, until I come into some more money, and have the ability to pay off that credit in order to pay off the loan. Hence, I redeem the value of the car. You see, that is what it means to be redeemed.

But Jesus has done it differently, and Peter, the apostle, put it this way. In 1 Peter 1:18, he said, *"For it is not by perishable things, it is not by silver or gold, (or perhaps money in today's currency) that we were*

*redeemed. No, it is by the blood of Christ that we have been redeemed*" from the empty ways of our life. What have we been redeemed from? What are these empty ways?

Well, the Bible would talk about it in terms of sin. It's the stuff that gets in the way of our relationship with a perfect and Holy God. God recognised that problem, so he sent his Son into the world to fix that problem. So, when Jesus died on the cross, as Jens said on Friday, it was not only a sign that we are loved, but that he was paying the price for our sin, so that we would not have to.

We are a rescued people. We are redeemed by the blood of Christ.

What is our response to that? Well, I think maybe, it's just to fix our eyes on Jesus, to recognise all that he's done for us, and to constantly come back to him, to not get apathetic, to not rest on what he has once done, but to stay true, to give him our thanks, to seek his forgiveness, and to go again, knowing that we are redeemed and rescued by him.

## **Part 2: God is faithful**

Let's look now at verses 72 to 75. I think we can read it like this: *"Jesus, the horn of salvation", "will show mercy to our ancestors. He will remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham, to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, to enable us to serve him without fear."*

Now clearly, the context of the story seems to speak to the people of Israel. But, when Jesus came, he said he came to save all. He told us to go make disciples of all nations. It's why Paul said that Jesus came, for both male and female, whether slave or free, Jew and Gentile (Galatians 3:28). We are all grafted into God's family and so we share in his promises to be faithful to us, to honour the promises he swore to Abraham.

Right in the middle of the passage, we read that God made a holy covenant with Abram, a holy covenant with his people. He promised to bless Abraham and his family, to watch and protect over them as they grew and they moved out to the promised land around the world. We're part of that promise. God is faithful.

Now, a promise is a big deal, and this is a mega-promise. This is a holy covenant promise. And I guess it's probably most like a vow that you make on a wedding day. Trust is central to that vow, and if the trust is broken, if the covenant is broken, you have a problem. We look for a politician, who will say what he says or she says and deliver on what they say, because that builds trust, it builds confidence. But if you don't deliver on the covenant, you have a separation, a drifting apart, because of that lack of trust. And that's what happened with Israel. They broke the terms of their agreement with God. Hence, they were exiled and found themselves again in occupation. But God never wavered. He remained faithful throughout.

Now, I recognise that it can feel hard right now to know that God is a rescuer, and that he is faithful. It feels like we are in a valley, in a valley filled with darkness, and we do not know the way out.

I was struck last week by some words by a theologian called Jürgen Moltmann on his 94<sup>th</sup> birthday. He said that, *"We find ourselves in the darkest valley, and God might not extract us out of that valley, but we can be assured that God will enter it with us and lead us through it"*. He will journey with us through that valley. I thought that was a really interesting way to think about how God might journey with us, and it reminded me of Psalm 23 v 4, which says, *"Though I walk through the valley, I will fear no evil, for the Lord is with me."* The Lord is with us. When it feels like we're in this valley, like Coronavirus has gripped the world, and it's hard to find the light, it's hard to find the hope, the Lord is with us.

A few years ago, Lucy and I, departed this country and set off to serve as missionaries in Peru. I was feeling quite confident, having quit my job and left friends and family behind. But, as soon as we got on the plan to fly out and the turbulence set in, I suddenly experienced a well of fear and anxiety that I did not realise I was carrying. With every bump, I internally felt this sense of fear, panic, and dread. And it was in that moment that I found myself turning to some words, again, in Psalm 23: *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He leads me to green pastures."* As the turbulence repeated itself again and again, the fear gripped me again and again, and so I said the words again and again. Where there was fear, peace filled, and I just found myself feeling increasingly assured. I wasn't going to turn the plane around or not go to Peru because Lucy and I had felt called by God to go. But I learned to trust that the Lord went with me, and I had to repeat the words of the Psalm again and again during that year as fear remained close by.

The Lord is with us. He might not extract us from the valley, but he is here in the here and now, and he is faithful to the end.

### **Part 3: Way Makers Together**

We're now moving into the third section of this story, and there's a change now. Zechariah's moved on from talking about Jesus to talking about his son John the Baptist, and he says this about him, doesn't he, from verses 76. He says that he will be the one to prepare the way for Jesus. He'll be a light shining in the darkness. He will lead God's people on the path of peace.

That was John's calling, and in the scene of Jesus's baptism, where John baptises him, there's almost a transition, a passing on of the baton, as Jesus becomes the great Way maker. He becomes the one who says, *"I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father, except through me. No one comes to him except through me"* (John 14:6). And I believe that we are called to be way makers together, to be like John the Baptist.

If you're a part of our 10:30am or 6pm service, you'll be very familiar with a song called "Way maker." The lyrics are:

"Way maker, Miracle worker, Promise keeper, Light in the darkness , My God, That is who you are".

I want to draw out a few of these words, starting with the idea that he is a 'way maker', that he is a 'light in the darkness'. We're talking about Jesus, but I believe that we step into that call as well. Now, this is a strange time, and already, I know that many of you are doing this in incredible ways, from befriending, to loving your neighbour, from serving on the frontline, whether heroically in the NHS, the shop floor, the post office, wherever you may be. Thank you for all that you are doing. And I think we need to think about how we can be way makers in this time, how we can shine brightly.

Maybe it starts in the home, being kind to yourself. If you live with others then maybe it then becomes about how you reflect Christ to your house/flat mates, your partner and your kids. And I know that's where I have to start. I struggle sometimes just to be the kind, the generous, the loving Tim to my wife and kids that I need to be. I think once we've done that, we need to look outside. Who is in our network? Who's around us? Who can we help, and who can we bless? It's a way of being salt and light at this time. I love the way that the youth and the students are using social media to share the good news, to share the story of Jesus. This time is opening up all kinds of opportunities. I think we have to be grateful for those. Clearly, this is a hard and tragic time too. But this is the time that we find ourselves and I think we have to think creatively about how we can use this time. How we can be way makers and light in the darkness at this time.

The next words I want to draw out are that Jesus is the 'miracle worker' and the 'promise keeper'. I've said that I'm not sure if God is going to extract us from the valley. He might not. But also, he might, and we cannot lose hope. We have to keep praying, don't we, that God might move, that he might stop this virus, because he can. He does not will suffering. No, he wills to love us and to be with us. And so, we keep believing. We keep praying big prayers, both for each other, for this town, and for this world. But how? How do we keep this hope?

Well, I think Proverbs 3, offers some fantastic wisdom for this time. I'll paraphrase the start. It starts like this: God says that we need to keep his commands. We need to hold onto his knowledge, because it will help us to endure. Then it says, *"Let love and faithfulness never leave you. Bind them around your neck. Write them on the tablets of your heart."* I think that's what we have to do. It's a bit like what I did in that example when I was overcome by fear and panic. I just drew on the words that were there. What is on your heart? What are you storing up that you can turn to in your time of need? Maybe that is a challenge for us at this time.

I want to share one final story. It's the story of the Thai cave rescue. It took place in July 2018. A group of boys got stranded in a complex cave system, as it filled up with water. And so an incredible rescue story then unfolded. The rescue required entering this cave system, a mile or more down route, and there was a treacherous journey through deep and dark water with strong currents. The first brave diver took a guide rope from the entrance all the way to the end. That rope basically remained a constant. It was the way that they didn't get lost. It was the way that stopped them from falling adrift in the current. When times got hard, they just held on. When panic and fear set in, they held on, because if they let go of the rope, they might have been lost. I think that rope is God's Word. It's his scripture, and it's his Spirit. We may find ourselves right now to be in a valley, and we have to hold onto that rope. We cannot let go. We need to hold onto his truth and his promises, to his Spirit that is with us, to the hope that he brings of a life eternal, to know that we are loved and redeemed. We have that promise, we have that good news, and we need to find it, hold onto it, and grip tightly, and when we find it, we need to share it with those around us, because those around us may well be overcome by fear and lost in darkness, but we have light. We have good news. I truly believe it.

So I want to finish this by reminding us, God is our rescuer. God is faithful, and we are called but Way makers together.

Let that be our prayer today. Amen.

## Songs

### The Blessing

Verse

The Lord bless you

And keep you

Make his face shine upon you

And be gracious to you

The Lord turn his

Face toward you

And give you peace

Chorus

Amen

Amen

Amen



Bridge  
May his favor  
Be upon you  
And a thousand generations  
And your family  
And your children  
And their children  
And their children

Bridge  
May his presence  
Go before you  
And behind you  
And beside you  
All around you  
And within you  
He is with you  
He is with you

Bridge  
In the morning  
In the evening  
In your coming  
And your going  
In your weeping  
And rejoicing  
He is for you  
He is for you

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## **Goodness Of God**

### **Verse 1**

I love You Lord  
Oh Your mercy never fails me  
All my days  
I've been held in Your hands  
From the moment that I wake up  
Until I lay my head  
I will sing of the goodness of God

### **Chorus**

All my life You have been faithful  
All my life You have been so so good  
With every breath that I am able  
I will sing of the goodness of God

### **Verse 2**

I love Your voice  
You have led me through the fire  
In darkest night  
You are close like no other  
I've known You as a father  
I've known You as a friend  
I have lived in the goodness of God

Bridge  
Your goodness is running after  
It's running after me  
Your goodness is running after  
It's running after me  
With my life laid down  
I'm surrendered now  
I give You everything  
Your goodness is running after  
It's running after me

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## Update from Ronel Geldenhuys

Hello, dear St. Saviour's. I greet you in the name of Jesus from sunny South Africa.

Early in March, our international ministry discussed at length what we need to do during this very testing time that we see globally with the COVID-19, and we decided to have a four-month pause on all ministry activities. A couple of weeks later, our president announced the lockdown time for South Africa, when we had about 500 cases that were positive. During that time, I prayed, and I asked God, "Lord, where do you want me to be during this lockdown time?" As a leader, it was difficult to decide, because of course I have a responsibility to our team in South Africa, but also, the teams that I oversee in Rwanda and Kenya, and somehow being six hours away from where I'm usually based would feel like I'm abandoning the flock.

The Lord led me to Mark 6 v 31. I had something in my heart that I felt, and I believed it was the Lord: "Work from a desolate place." Jesus invites the disciples, and he says, "Come away with me to a desolate place and rest for a while." And I thought it would be just rest, and yes, rest is part of this lockdown time, but here where I am in Philipstown, which is a small, little town in the middle of South Africa, it is really quiet. It is remote, and it is desolate. It is here where I have found real rest for my soul. But at the same time, in that passage in Mark 6, there was a need and a demand, a crowd that followed Jesus.

The second thing that the Lord told me is to give what you've got. During this time, although we have met as a team regularly on Skype and Zoom and work, in one sense, resumed, we also felt the Lord was saying, "Give what you've got." Many phone calls, people have been asking for spiritual direction, have been maybe needing some encouragement, have contacted me in this time, and it's been a privilege to give just that little bit that I've got.

The Lord also led me to Lamentations 3 v 40, which talks about examine your own hearts. "Test your hearts, and return to God. Lift up your hearts and your hands to the God of heaven." In this lockdown time, part of the process that myself and also our team is going through, it's actually to really say, "Lord, where do you want to consecrate my heart? Where do you want to change my heart, where I need to change?" As a church, maybe God wants us to turn to our own hearts and to investigate, "Lord, is there anything that you want to bring into truth or maybe restore, or even to a place of repentance?"

Another passage that really meant a lot to me in this time is Psalm 25 v 14, where it says, "For those who fear the Lord, he confides, or he shares his secrets of his covenant with them." This is a different part, which really sort of spoke to my heart in many, many levels. In one sense, it's almost as if God is calling us back to intimacy, but also, that he wants to bring that which he wants to use for the next season. I would maybe call it the "post-COVID season," for us as a ministry and for me personally to really trust him for creative ways in bringing healing and restoration to the people of Africa and maybe worldwide. So, I am seeking God and really asking him, "Lord, how do you want me to do ministry different, to do missions different, to reach people in a different way?"

Lastly, we had some fun also during this lockdown time appreciating relationships again, and every week, I meet up with some of my old St. Saviour's friends. We've reconnected and we just share. We pray together, and we laugh together on Skype. And we also have, in the house that I'm staying in, had a Scrabble competition going on, and we've signed up for the Mzansi Lockdown Marathon, and we've been running around the house, two kilometers every day, approximately. Also, we've set up a table tennis table inside the house.

So yes, it is in this difficult questioning time, a time of death, a time of despair, and a time of many challenges, I think God is calling us back to be the true church, to be his sons and daughters. I want to leave you with Psalm 28 v 7, which I really hope is an encouragement in this time. "The Lord is my strength and shield. I trust him with all my heart. He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy."

Bless you, and know that we are praying for you in England, and St. Saviour's as a family is very close to my heart, and I really pray that God will confide in you the secrets of his covenant during this lockdown time.

## Song

### God Of Revival

#### Verse 1

We've seen what You can do oh God of wonders  
Your power has no end  
The things You've done before in greater measure  
You will do again

#### Pre-Chorus

'Cause there's no prison wall  
You can't break through  
No mountain You can't move  
All things are possible  
There's no broken body You can't raise  
No soul that You can't save  
All things are possible (things are possible)

### Chorus

The darkest night  
You can light it up  
You can light it up  
Oh God of revival  
Let hope arise  
Death is overcome  
You've already won  
Oh God of revival

### Verse 2

You rose in victory and now You're seated  
Forever on the throne  
So why should my heart fear what You defeated  
I will trust in You alone

### Bridge

Come awaken Your people come awaken this city  
Oh God of revival pour it out pour it out  
Every stronghold will crumble  
(I) Hear the chains hit the ground  
Oh God of revival pour it out pour it out

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## Closing Prayer

Lord, I thank you that you are, as Lucy said, you are our sustained, you are our hope, you are our light in the darkness. And Lord, wherever we find ourselves right now, I pray, would you lead us, would you guide us, would you bring us the peace and the joy to endure? Would you help us to be encouragers, help us to be way makers with you. In Jesus's name, may you bless and keep us this week, Amen.

*We do want to remind you that as a church, we really want to be there for you in this season with the Coronavirus. So if you have any practical needs, whatever they may be, please do get in touch with the church via our website, and if there are other pastoral needs that you have that you need prayer for, then again, do get in touch. We really, sincerely mean it, and we'd love to hear from you.*