



Over the past 4 weeks I have included a psalm as part of our worship as we tend to use them in weekday worship and not in our normal Sunday service. All the psalms we have heard, including today's, were written by King David, the most prolific of the psalm writers but many were written by others including Moses and Solomon and, as in the case of next Sunday's psalm for our patronal festival, by the Sons of Korah (Moses nephew).

Today's Psalm taken from 139, is so full of positivity and assurance. The writer says God formed us before we were born, God therefore making us who we are. It reminds us that God knows us like no one else knows us, maybe not even ourselves. There is a hint of tease from the writer when he questions where can we go to get away from the watchful eye of God but we are reassured that he is always with us whatever the situation, through our waking and our sleeping, in our working and in our resting, and even in our times of darkness, he is there to bring light. This is a great Psalm of adoration and the perfect antidote for the times we are living in especially as people start to pine more and more for 'normality' in their lives.

The psalms often reflect how the writers were feeling at the time or what was happening around them so they have such variety of theme that there is always one to be found for every situation; you just need to look for it.

The psalms are often referred to as ‘the hymn book of the old testament’ and were set to music when originally written, many being noted as ‘to the choirmaster’. It is therefore not surprising that many of the hymns we sing Sunday by Sunday have been inspired by the psalms. All our readings today truly give us everything we need to face the week ahead.

Collect for the day

Merciful God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as pass our understanding; pour into our hearts such love toward you that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans

¹² So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— ¹³ for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

¹⁸ I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; ²⁰ for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; ²³ and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Reading from Psalm 139

Lord, you have searched me out and known me;
You know my sitting down and my rising up; you discern my thoughts
from afar.
You trace my journeys and my resting-places
And are acquainted with all my ways.
Indeed, there is not a word on my lips,
But you, O Lord, know it altogether.
You press upon me behind and before
And lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high that I cannot attain it.
Where can I go then from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I climb up to heaven, you are there;
If I make the grave my bed, you are there also.
If I take the wings of the morning
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there your hand will lead me
And your right hand hold me fast.
If I say, 'Surely the darkness will cover me,
And the light around me turn to night.
Darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as day;
Darkness and light to you are both alike.

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew

²⁴ He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; ²⁵ but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. ²⁶ So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. ²⁷ And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' ²⁸ He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' ²⁹ But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. ³⁰ Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers,

Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.”

³⁶ Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” ³⁷ He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; ³⁸ the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰ Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, ⁴² and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

Words from Fr Rodney

The last few months have been for all of us a time of hopes and fears. Hope that everything is eventually going to be alright, fear of what we are having to go through and not least of the virus itself. In today’s reading from St. Paul’s letter to the Romans, St. Paul seeks to strengthen the Christians in Rome who are going through persecution in Rome at the very heart of the Roman Empire. He encourages them not to lose hope even though what they are going through is very real, and he assures them that one day they will look back on all that they have suffered and endured, and be thankful to God who has brought them through it all. We may not be going through a life threatening persecution, but we are going through a potential life threatening experience, and over the last months have seen our lives changed by it. I’m sure that most of us are now weary of it all. St. Paul encourages us not to lose hope but to ‘*wait for it with patience*’ and to look forward to the time when it is all over, and perhaps be more thankful than we were before for the life we have.



Let us pray

Father as we come together in fellowship and prayer with our brothers and sisters in faith far and wide we bring before you our thanks for the blessings of the last week and are hopes and concerns for the week ahead. We pray particularly for the safety of all those who are returning to their places of worship after a long absence and we pray for all those churches including our own who are planning to open in the near future. We ask for your guidance and strength for our church leaders, churchwardens, council members and all those working to ensure that we can return safely to the places we have missed so much and we give thanks for their hard work and dedication. Amen

Father we continue to bring before you our troubled world, beset by so many problems. We pray for wisdom and guidance for all those in authority that they may work diligently to further the cause of justice, peace and equality. We also ask that the lessons and observations we have all experienced during these challenging times, inspire compassion, empathy and the will to create a fairer, kinder world. Amen

Loving Father as we come together today we take comfort from the assurance heard in the words of the Psalm that you know our concerns even before the words are on our tongues. With this in mind we bring before you our prayers for our families, friends and neighbours, whilst giving thanks for the love and friendship that has been so important to us

over these last weeks. We also pray for all those who are vulnerable, those who are anxious about the future and those struggling to cope and we continue to pray for the safety of our frontline key workers and their families, putting the needs of others before themselves every day. Amen

Faithful Father, we pray for all those who are sick and suffering in body, mind or spirit particularly any we wish to pray for today... we ask that your hand is laid upon them, holding them fast and giving comfort and strength to all those in need. We continue to pray for all those suffering in the pandemic as it sweeps across the world and for all those caring for them, often in challenging circumstances. We also pray for your blessing on the efforts of all those working on developing effective treatments and vaccines. Amen

Finally Father we bring before you all those who have gone before us, especially those who have died recently, those whose anniversaries fall around this time and any known to us this day....We thank you for their lives, their love and friendship and ask that they rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen

In a moment of silence bring your own prayers to God

The Lords prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.
Amen.