

WRITTEN WORSHIP
Sunday 1st June 2025
Prepared by Jane Wakerley


The Methodist Church
Grantham and Vale of Belvoir Methodist Circuit 22/15

Freeing Captives



Call to worship

Based on Psalm 97

The Lord is king.

Let the earth rejoice.

His lightnings light up the world.

The earth sees and trembles.

The heavens proclaim his righteousness.

And all peoples behold his glory.

Rejoice in the Lord,

and give thanks to his holy name!

Father, we come before you, because you have chosen us for service, you have called us by your grace, and you have set us free from all that held us, and you have made us whole, and enabled us to know you. we have come to praise and to thank you In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Hymn 94 To God be the glory, great things he has done

To God be the glory, great things He hath done,
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life in atonement for sin,
And opened the life-gate that all may go in.

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the earth hear His voice;
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the people rejoice;
Oh, come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory; great things He hath done.*

Oh, perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
To every believer the promise of God;
and every offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done,
 And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
 But purer, and higher, and greater will be
 Our wonder, our transport when Jesus we see.

Frances Jane van Alstyne (1820-1915)

Prayers of Praise and Confession and Lord's prayer

Loving God, we come to praise you for who you are and for all you have done for us. We praise you for your glory, your authority and your sovereignty and for the life you have given to us. We praise you for your loving Son Jesus Christ and for his coming to set us free, to open blind eyes and to heal broken hearts and lives. We praise you for the freedom you have given to us.



We also ask for your forgiveness for the many times we have used that freedom to turn our backs on you and to go our own ways. Allowing ourselves to be controlled by others' ideas and opinions. Allowing decisions to be made for us and allowing life to simply drift by.

Loving God give us the strength, the courage and the determination to stand up for what we know is real and true of you. Forgive us, touch our hearts and change us, cleanse our minds and make us new, renew our lives and set us free. We ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

We say The Lord's prayer.

Readings Acts 16:16-34 Paul and Silas in prison



¹⁶ One day as we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a young servant woman who had an evil spirit that enabled her to predict the future. She earned a lot of money for her owners by telling fortunes. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God! They announce to you how you can be saved!" ¹⁸ She did this for many days, until Paul became so upset that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I order you to come out of her!" The spirit went out of her that very moment. ¹⁹ When her owners realized that their chance of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them to the authorities in the public square. ²⁰ They brought them before the Roman officials and said, "These men are Jews, and they are causing trouble in our city. ²¹ They are teaching customs that are against our law; we are Roman citizens, and we cannot accept these customs or practice them." ²² And the crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas.

Then the officials tore the clothes off Paul and Silas and ordered them to be whipped. ²³ After a severe beating, they were thrown into jail, and the jailer was ordered to lock them up tight. ²⁴ Upon receiving this order, the jailer threw them into the inner cell and fastened their feet between heavy blocks of wood.

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was a violent earthquake, which shook the prison to its foundations. At once all the doors opened, and the chains fell off all the prisoners. ²⁷ The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he thought that the prisoners had escaped; so he pulled out his sword and was about to kill himself. ²⁸ But Paul shouted at the top of his voice, "Don't harm yourself We are all here!"

²⁹ The jailer called for a light, rushed in, and fell trembling at the feet of Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he led them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

³¹ They answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your family." ³² Then they preached the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in the house. ³³ At that very hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; and he and all his family were baptized at once. ³⁴ Then he took Paul and Silas up into his house and gave them some food to eat. He and his family were filled with joy, because they now believed in God.

Reflection

Imagine how Paul and Silas might have felt when they heard the heavy prison door closing and then locked and they were shut in, left in the dark. As they sat there did they remember the story of Jesus reading the scroll in the temple and the words from Isaiah spoken by Jesus. (Luke 4:16-21)

The reading from Luke saying

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written-

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, Because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing".

Did they remember these words read so passionately by Jesus about the many injustices at that time, knowing that this was where he was needed to bring hope to the poor and proclaim, freedom for the prisoners. Did these words give Paul and Silas the strength to continue that same work in the very place and for the very people Jesus had said he had come to help. Even though they were in pain they began to minister to the others in the prison as they began to pray and sing and offer comfort and hope and support to them, and freedom.

The slave girl, jailer and his family and Paul and Silas were all freed. Today there are still many in need of freedom. It could be from spiritual oppression like the slave girl and there are many today struggling with addictions, and toxic relationships and Jesus can offer them freedom from all that is holding them captive.

Jesus can also offer us freedom through our faith and through our worship which can be a source of strength to us in times of challenge and struggles.

Jesus can also offer freedom from our fears and anxieties. The Jailer was consumed by fear but received reassurance from Paul and this led to his salvation. Today we can be battling with fears and doubts from the past and about the future. By putting our trust in Jesus, we can find peace and the courage to face the future and the challenges we face whatever they may be.

We can find freedom in Jesus which is not just about escaping the hardships we might be facing but about transformation. We can find we are facing trials as those in the reading but our worship can open doors our grace can change hearts and the unity we find in one another can strengthen and lead us into a greater purpose and unity in Jesus.

Hymn 404 God's spirit is in my heart

God's Spirit is in my heart,
He has called me and set me apart.
This is what I have to do,
what I have to do.

*He sent me to give the Good News to the poor,
Tell prisoners that they are prisoners no more,
Tell blind people that they can see,
And set the downtrodden free
And go tell everyone the news that the Kingdom of God has come,
And go tell everyone the news that the Kingdom of God has come.*

Just as the Father sent me,
So I'm sending you out to be
My witnesses throughout the world,
The whole of the world.

Don't worry what you have to say,
Don't worry because on that day
God's Spirit will speak in your heart,
Will speak in your heart.

Alan T Dale (1902-1979) Hubert Richards (1921)

Prayers of Intercession

Lord, we pray for all who are suffering and enslaved in any way.

We pray especially for those who see no hope, no new beginning, no relief and no freedom

We pray for all suffering from oppression, persecution or imprisonment, because of their faith in Jesus. May the hope of Jesus set them free.

We pray for all victims of violence and for all who are despised or rejected, for all frustrated by illness, pain, or poverty. For all who are slaves to the many kinds of addiction. May the Power of Christ set them free.

We pray for all oppressors, and all who dare not give their people freedom. Freedom, to think, to act or choose for themselves. For all who exploit other weaknesses and fears. May the truth of Christ set them free

We pray for ourselves, that every corner of our lives might be open to God's will,
That his love and truth will give us hope and his presence will fill us with joy.
May the power of the Spirit light up our lives with peace and understanding and may the light of Christ set us free. Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer. Amen.

Hymn 345 And can it be

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, should die for me?



'Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies!
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine!
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.

He left His Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace;
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race;
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, it found out me.

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Blessing

Loving Lord, be with us all throughout this coming week, as we seek to serve you and reveal your glory to the world. **Amen**