

Wednesday Worship 4th November 2020

'Liturgy of the Ordinary' - Checking Email

Introduction

This week we continue to think about finding God in the everyday moments of life, based on ideas from the book 'Liturgy of the Ordinary' by Tish Harrison Warren. Today the subject is the world of work, as exemplified by checking email, not forgetting, of course, those whose work is threatened or lost in the new lockdown, as well as those who work in the home or as volunteers. Our daily work may seem to have little to do with God but in fact nothing is outside his care.

Opening prayers and lighting of a candle

All Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ.

All Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:
let us sing to God with thankful hearts.

All Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

All God of all our days and years,
we set this time apart for you.
Form us in the likeness of Christ
so that our lives may glorify you.
Amen.

Hymn: Lord of all hopefulness

Prayer

The Lord is with us, he is our stronghold;
God will help at the break of day.

All God is our refuge and strength,
ready to help whenever we are in trouble:
God will help at the break of day.

All We will not fear, even if the earth shakes.
and the mountains topple into the sea:
God will help at the break of day.

All Come now and look at the works of the Lord,
the awesome things he has done on earth:
God will help at the break of day.

All Be still and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations;
I will be exalted in the earth:
God will help at the break of day.

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.

All **The Lord is with us, he is our stronghold;
God will help at the break of day.**

1st Reading: Genesis 2.1-9, 15

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

Prayer of response

Lord, we come to you, our Creator and Redeemer.
We give you thanks for the pattern of work and rest
that you lay before us.
May we in all things and at all times bring glory to you,
joining in creation's hymn of praise
in both work and rest.

All **Amen.**

Praise

Composer of the cosmos
all offers you praise:

All Brother Sun
who orchestrates our days

All Sister Moon
singer of light and tides

All Brother Wind
who gives voice to the skies

All Sister Water
her music fluent through streams

All Mother Earth
who nurtures each season's song.

May we too share your bounty.
All **Mover of mountains**
enable us to change.

Psalm 104.1-4, 14-15, 23-24

Bless the Lord, O my soul.
O Lord my God, you are very great.
You are clothed with honour and majesty,
wrapped in light as with a garment.
You stretch out the heavens like a tent,
you set the beams of your chambers on the waters,
you make the clouds your chariot,
you ride on the wings of the wind,
you make the winds your messengers,
fire and flame your ministers.

You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,
and plants for people to use,
to bring forth food from the earth,
and wine to gladden the human heart,
oil to make the face shine,
and bread to strengthen the human heart.

People go out to their work
and to their labour until the evening.
O Lord, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.

Prayer of response

Creator God, you have given us this world
to sustain and delight us.
May we treat it with respect and use its resources wisely

All **Amen.**

2nd Reading: Colossians 3.12-17, 23-24

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ.

Prayer of response

Lord, let your word dwell in us,
prompt us to do all things for you
and help us to live in your peace.

All **Amen.**

3rd Reading: Mark 6.1-6

[Jesus] left that place and came to his home town, and his disciples followed him. 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! 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. Then Jesus said to them, 'Prophets are not without honour, except in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house.' And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Prayer of response

Lord, as we go about our daily work
remind us that you too worked
and know what it is to have a job.
Sustain us when work is hard,
help us when we have no work,
and show us how we can serve you
in shop, office, home, factory or farm.

All **Amen.**

Hymn: Brother, sister, let me serve you

Reflection

As I was putting this service together many emails arrived in my inbox. You may know the feeling, regardless of your line of work. And even if you don't have work emails there are always plenty of adverts, reminders of appointments, requests for help and people informing you that you've won a lottery you haven't entered. The sheer volume of communication that comes to us each day can be overwhelming, to the point where you just want to close your eyes, shut down the computer and ignore it all.

Some superhumans manage to empty their email inboxes every day, and there are plenty of tips for being more organised with emails. Some might suggest looking at each message only once and dealing with it immediately. Others suggest prioritising, so that quick and easy things are dealt with as soon as they come, then more complicated but urgent things, and then things that are complicated but not urgent. But in my experience as soon as you have it all sorted some more emails turn up, so an empty inbox doesn't last for long.

When we're able to gather in church we may be sent out with the words "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord". This is because there's no competition between liturgy, which means "the work of the people", and our weekday jobs, voluntary work, homemaking or any of the other things we do outside of church. In both church and world we are blessed to do the work of God's people – whether it's worship or delivering parcels.

In recent years there's been a move in many circles to bring together work and worship, to break down the divide between worship and church work and the ordinary lives that most of us live. In fact, if you're interested in exploring how faith and work interact there's a website called the Theology of Work Project, which I've linked to below. But somehow a feeling persists that we do God's work only when doing church things, while going into the office, studying, looking after the home or working on a factory floor are irrelevant to the life of faith.

However, it's not the case that our apparently more spiritual activities are what's really important while work is inferior. And neither is it the case that our daily lives are the real work and the spiritual stuff is an awkward add-on. The work we do in worship, whether at home or in a church building, changes us and sends us out into the work we do in offices, homes, schools and everywhere else we go. And, likewise, our work outside of church activities is brought into our worship because it shapes and informs who we are and what we bring to God and his kingdom.

It's important to remember that all work that is honest and good is part of God's kingdom. It's part of God's work to transform, redeem and restore the world. In every email we send, every boiler we fix, every essay we write or every dishwasher we load we have a choice. We can be slapdash and lazy, do the minimum, treat others as disposable and generally make ourselves and others miserable. Or we can work carefully, do our best, treat others with respect and spread a little of God's light and goodness around. We can choose to take seriously being sent out to love and serve the Lord by being part of his mission to set creation right. We are blessed and sent whether we're a builder or running a mission agency.

Of course, this is easier to picture in some jobs than in others. It's easy to see creativity in the work of an artist or musician. It's easy to see care for others in the work of teachers and medical staff. It's harder to see God's mission at work in data entry, burger flipping or financial services. It's easy to feel cut off when sitting behind a computer screen communicating with people you've never met, and this is only made worse in these days of lockdown. Yet, there is such a thing as a 'ministry of competence', where we serve others by doing our job well, and make things work just a little bit better. And it is possible to build relationships with people even through a screen. I've been working from home for over 10 years and there are people who I have built up relationships with during that time even through emails, by trying to treat them well and work well for them, and we've got to know each other beyond the back and forth of work.

Hard though it might be at times to see our daily work as part of God's kingdom, we need to hold on to the fact that it all matters to God, we all matter to God, and no good action, word or thought, big or small, will be lost or forgotten by God.

Every email counts.

Intercessions

Eternal Lord God, to whom belong all power and dominion, we seek the guidance of your Spirit for all on whom is laid the responsibility of government, both in this country and, as the people of the United States go to the polls, in that divided and hurting land.

Lord hear us:

All **Lord graciously hear us.**

O God our Father, as we acknowledge our dependence on your bounty for our daily food, so we also seek your blessing on those engaged in agriculture. We pray that you will so prosper their work that the earth may yield to us its full harvest without harm to your creation.

Lord hear us:

All **Lord graciously hear us.**

We pray, too, Lord, for all who work in industry and commerce, in the arts, and in the home. We thank you for creating women and men in your own image, giving them the ability to turn raw material and ideas into things of use and beauty. May they not forget their indebtedness to you, nor that their creative efforts are performed to your honour, the enrichment of all and the benefit of the earth.

Lord hear us:

All **Lord graciously hear us.**

In you, Lord, are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. We pray for all engaged in the work of education and training. Bless the work of our universities, colleges, schools and training institutions, that in them your name may be honoured and from them may come men, women and young people who seek and love the truth.

Lord hear us:

All **Lord graciously hear us.**

We thank you, O God, for all who work in the social services, caring professions and in voluntary work. Help them combine sympathy with firmness and love with understanding. Uphold them when they grow weary, guard them from despair when human problems seem intractable, and renew them daily in your love.

Lord hear us:

All **Lord graciously hear us.**

Father we pray for the casualties of our economic life:
for those whose work is monotonous or stressful,
for the low-paid and those struggling to make ends meet,
for the unemployed and those threatened with redundancy,
for failed businesses and all victims of the pandemic,
for those in debt, those who are ill, those who are homeless,
for those who are anxious or in despair.
May we all work together to strengthen the weak and empower the powerless.

Lord hear us:

All **Lord graciously hear us.**

Trusting in the compassion of God,
let us pray with confidence
as our saviour has taught us:

All **Our Father...**

Hymn: *Through all the changing scenes of life*

Closing prayers

All To a troubled world
peace from Christ.

All To a searching world
love from Christ.

All To a waiting world
hope from Christ.

Go forth into the world in peace; be of good courage;
hold fast that which is good; render to no one evil for evil;
strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak;
help the afflicted; honour everyone;
love and serve the Lord,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit;
and the blessing...

All Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.