

# **Worship Together**

## **Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> January**

### **Opening Prayer**

Loving, gracious God, you know us better than we know ourselves. You know our thoughts and the motives for the things we do. You know what we want to say even before we speak the words, and when we struggle to find the words to worship you, you know what is in our hearts. Your presence surrounds us, and your love sustains us, may we know that you hear and accept our spoken and unspoken words.

**Amen**

- 1. Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?  
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?  
Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known,  
will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?**
- 2. Will you leave your self behind if I but call your name?  
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?  
Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare,  
will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?**
- 3. Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?  
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean and do such as this unseen,  
and admit to what I mean in you and you in me?**
- 4. Will you love the 'you' you hide if I but call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around  
through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?**

5. **Lord, your summons echoes true when you but call my name.  
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.  
In your company I'll go where your love and footsteps show.  
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.**

John Bell ©1987 WGRG, Iona Community  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAYM8pWCwWk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAYM8pWCwWk)

### **Prayers**

Loving God, you are always ready to hear us; always wanting to show us the depths of your love and your understanding of us; always wanting to comfort us and celebrate with us. Forgive us for our unloving thoughts and actions, for the times we reject you and the hurt we cause ourselves and others. As your children, may we know your peace and joy and everlasting love. **Amen.**

**Readings: Psalm 139: 1 – 10 & John 1: 43 – 51**

### **Sermon**

The first encounter Nathanael had with Jesus must have been a disconcerting one. They had never met before, but Jesus commends him for his faith and his integrity. Nathanael's response shows his confusion as he asks Jesus, 'How do you know me?' Jesus explains he has seen him sitting under his fig-tree, indicating he knew Nathanael was a man of prayer (traditionally the fig tree was the place one sat to study the scriptures). And so, in this first encounter, Jesus showed he knew that Nathanael was a man who spent time with, and who was devoted to God; that somehow Jesus already knew Nathanael!

Meeting someone who we feel can 'see through' us can provoke different responses. When someone says the same thing as us at the same time, it can just be something to smile or laugh at and we pass it off without thinking too much about it. But, for Nathanael, the thought of Jesus knowing so much about him was disconcerting, as it was for the Psalmist who speaks of his inability to escape from God. In the same way we can feel uncomfortable if we think someone knows too much about us. We may consider it an invasion of our privacy or make us feel anxious. One way of responding is to put up barriers so that the

person, friend, maybe even God, can't get too close to challenge our comfort. But there is a different way of dealing with that discomfort.

It appears that Nathanael, despite that strange introduction, did not turn away but stayed with Jesus; he is still there in Chapter 21 when Jesus meets his disciples beside the Sea of Tiberius after he has Risen. The Psalmist too, although asking where to go to escape from God, is also positive about the closeness of God's presence. He affirms that wherever he might be God's hand would guide him and hold him safe.

In a year when life has been so difficult, and when perhaps we dreamed of escaping somewhere, anywhere, the Psalmists words still ring true. Wherever we are, in whatever circumstances we find ourselves, we can be assured of God's guidance and love, and we can live in God's inescapable presence.

**Prayers** (from the Methodist Church website)

**Ubi Caritas** (*Where grace and love is, there is God*)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4TG60Hvs1Y>

God our companion, we bring to you all who feel alone:

- For refugees who have left behind their country, their homes and all that is familiar.
- For those, like the women in Saudi, imprisoned for protesting for human rights.
- For those who have felt isolated because of the pandemic; for students, for those in nursing homes, for all those unable to see their families.

God, who rules over heaven and earth, we bring to you:

- the USA as they prepare for a new administration.
- our government, that you will give our leaders wisdom and integrity.
- church leaders, in all denominations, that they will have a vision of your Kingdom, the courage to believe that change and transformation in the church and the world is possible, and the strength to work towards the fulfillment of your Kingdom.

**Amen**

***The Lord's Prayer .....***

- 1 Have you heard God's voice; has your heart been stirred?  
Are you still prepared to follow?  
Have you made a choice to remain and serve,  
though the way be rough and narrow?

*Will you walk the path that will cost you much  
and embrace the pain and sorrow?*

*Will you trust in One who entrusts to you  
the disciples of tomorrow?*

- 2 Will you use your voice; will you not sit down  
when the multitudes are silent?  
Will you make a choice to stand your ground  
when the crowds are turning violent?

*Will you walk the path...*

- 3 In your city streets will you be God's heart?  
Will you listen to the voiceless?  
Will you stop and eat, and when friendships start,  
will you share your faith with the faithless?

*Will you walk the path...*

- 4 Will you watch the news with the eyes of faith  
and believe it could be different?  
Will you share your views using words of grace?  
Will you leave a thoughtful imprint?

*We will walk the path that will cost us much  
and embrace the pain and sorrow.*

*We will trust in One who entrusts to us  
the disciples of tomorrow.*

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[www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1Aigbqg9eU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1Aigbqg9eU)

## **Blessing**

Loving God, be with us this day and always, flow in us and through us,  
cleanse, renew and reshape us. God the Father, Son & Holy Spirit  
remain with us always. **Amen.**