

Bath Methodist Churches Sunday Worship 18th October – Rev Dr Anthony Cross

Welcome and opening scripture verses

Singing the Faith 55

1 Immortal, invisible,
God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious,
the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious,
Thy great name we praise.

2 Unresting, unhasting,
and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting,
Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice, like mountains,
high soaring above
Thy clouds, which are fountains
of goodness and love.

3 To all, life Thou givest,
to both great and small,
in all life Thou livest,
the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish
as leaves on the tree,
and wither and perish,
but naught changeth Thee.

4 Great Father of glory,
pure Father of light,
Thine angels adore Thee,
all veiling their sight;
all praise we would render,
O help us to see
Tis only the splendour of light hideth
thee

Walter Chalmers Smith (1824–1908)

Prayers and Lord's Prayer

Reading: Exodus 13:17-22

Singing the Faith 481

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
he makes me lie in pastures green,
he leads me by the still, still waters,
his goodness restores my soul.

*And I will trust in you alone,
and I will trust in you alone,
for your endless mercy follows me,
your goodness will lead me home.*

He guides my ways in righteousness,
and he anoints my head with oil;
and my cup – it overflows with joy,
I feast on his pure delights.

And though I walk the darkest path –
I will not fear the evil one,
for you are with me, and your rod and
staff
are the comfort I need to know.

Stuart Townend (b. 1963) CCL167911

Reading: Hebrews 11:1-3, 5-10, 13-16 and 39-40

Sermon

They say “Seeing is believing.” And too often this is also true of Christians. Remember the disciple Thomas in John 20:24-25. “Unless I see,” he said. For all of us it can be difficult to believe in what we can’t see.

Yet “to believe” is a synonym for “to have faith,” and Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as “the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” It isn’t always easy to believe in the God we can’t see. Yet we can believe precisely because God says he’s with us always, see Matthew 28:20. He never leaves or forsakes us, see Joshua 1:5, 9 and 17. This is one reason we sang Psalm 23.

2 Chronicles 7:14 God promises he will hear us when we pray. Numbers 23:19 tells us we can believe everything God says because God keeps his promises.

See also Psalm 33:4 and Revelation 22:6.

And this brings us to an image we always need to have before us as we – as 2 Corinthians 5:7 says, “walk/live by faith not by sight.” The image is from Exodus 13:21-22. It’s a picture of the God who goes before us, who leads us, as we will sing in our final hymn. The pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night. God always ahead of his people. He is always where he hopes we will be. We are moving into God’s future, which will not be like our past, because we are a pilgrim people travelling on with the God who is always with us and before us.

At times, like the Israelites, we see God at work in our lives, but there are many times when we don’t see that. It’s then we’re to hold on to his word, his promises, and trust him, assured of things hoped for, certain of what we don’t see.

This sermon might seem like a Bible study to some of you. Good. Because at times of difficulty we need to keep reading God’s word, nourishing our souls, building our faith, listening to our God, who is always, by his Spirit, with us, speaking to us, and guiding us on.

Singing the Faith 238

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us
o'er the world's tempestuous sea;
guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,
for we have no help but thee,
yet possessing every blessing
if our God our Father be.

Spirit of our God, descending,
fill our hearts with heavenly joy,
love with every passion blending,
pleasure that can never cloy;
thus provided, pardoned, guided,
nothing can our peace destroy.

James Edmeston (1791-1867)

Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us;
all our weakness thou dost know,
thou didst tread this earth before us,
thou didst feel its keenest woe;
tempted, taunted, yet undaunted,
through the desert thou didst go.

Benediction