

*Christ Church New
Southgate & Friern Barnet*

16 October 2022

Welcome

Song: Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!

Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;
tender to me the promise of his word –
in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his name!
Make known his might, the deeds his arm
has done;
his mercy sure, from age to age the same –
his holy name: the Lord, the Mighty One.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by;
proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to
flight,
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word!
Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure:
tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord
to children's children and for evermore!

Song: 10, 000 reasons
Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul
Worship His holy name
Sing like never before, O my soul
I'll worship Your holy name

You're rich in love and you're slow to anger
Your name is great and Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness, I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find

[Chorus]
So bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul
Worship His holy name
Sing like never before, O my soul
I'll worship Your holy name
Bless you, Lord

And on that day when my strength is failing
The end draws near and my time has come
Still, my soul will sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years and then forevermore
Forevermore

Reading: Jeremiah 31.27-34

²⁷ "I, the Lord, say that the time is coming
when I will fill the land of Israel and Judah
with people and animals. ²⁸ And just as I
took care to uproot, to pull down, to
overthrow, to destroy, and to demolish
them, so I will take care to plant them and to
build them up. ²⁹ When that time comes,
people will no longer say,

"The parents ate the sour grapes,
But the children got the sour taste."

³⁰ Instead, those who eat sour grapes will
have their own teeth set on edge; and
everyone will die because of their own sin."

³¹ The Lord says, "The time is coming when
I will make a new covenant with the people
of Israel and with the people of Judah. ³² It
will not be like the old covenant that I made
with their ancestors when I took them by
the hand and led them out of Egypt.
Although I was like a husband to them, they
did not keep that covenant. ³³ The new
covenant that I will make with the people of
Israel will be this: I will put my law within
them and write it on their hearts. I will be
their God, and they will be my
people. ³⁴ None of them will have to teach a
neighbour to know the Lord, because all will
know me, from the least to the greatest. I
will forgive their sins and I will no longer

remember their wrongs. I, the Lord, have spoken.”

Lord's prayer

Our Father in heaven, arms up
hallowed be your name, banner shape
your kingdom come, hands together out to side
your will be done, side, palms side out
on earth as in heaven. Palms down & up
Give us today our daily bread. Hand together cupped
Forgive us our sins brush right hand
as we forgive those who sin against us.
brush left hand
Lead us not into temptation fist to chest across
but deliver us from evil. Other fist to chest across
For the kingdom, arms wide, palms side
the power, fists lifted
and the glory are yours rain fingers
now and for ever. Right hand pointing, left hand spiral finger out
Amen. Hands clap above head

All age Prayer

Song: Nothing's too big, big, big for his power
Nothing's too little, little for his care
Nothing's too big, big, big for his power
Nothing's too idly, widdly for his care
Nothing's too big, big, big for his power
Nothing's too incy-wincy for his care
Nothing's too big, big, big for his power
Nothing's too teeny-weeny for his care

He is God of the big, God of the little
God of the stuff somewhere in the middle
The King of moving mountains
Love's you more than you will ever know

Nothing's too big, nothing's too small
Nothing's too much, he cares for it all

Sermon: God our restorer

'Homes under the Hammer', 'George Clark's tiny homes', 'Ugly house to lovely house', and of 'grand designs' are all TV programmes about property development. It seems to me that the developers in all these programmes fall into two broad categories – ones that buy a house to paint it grey from ceiling to skirting board and rent it out for an arm and two legs, or those who lavish the house with careful restoration of every period feature, and live in it forever. If we were to try and describe God's character, he is like the latter. God is our restorer.

Here in Jeremiah 31 we learn more about the wreck of the house of Israel and Judah that we heard about from Lamentations two weeks ago. Jerusalem is destroyed and Judah have been carried off into exile, or slavery. Jeremiah has been weeping for 30 chapters for a city, nation and identity that has been lost and broken. Jeremiah is a prophet lamenting the utter break down of the relationship between the people of God and God. God who led his people by the hand like a father out of slavery, through the wilderness and into the promised land, this God has been forgotten. This God of care, compassion and mercy and love has been forgotten. Other gods have been sought instead and now destruction has come.

As Jeremiah sees the ruins of the city, he sees the ruins of a relationship between the people and God. And this relationship was a special one, because it was a covenant relationship. God has always promised his presence to his people, he has always promised to be faithful and loving to his people. God has always kept his promise, but the people failed. The ten commandments are the law which God asked his people to keep.

In a traditional marriage ceremony here in the UK, we exchange vows which are very

beautiful. But there is actually only one legally binding part and it is:

Are you Martin free lawfully to marry Davinia?

I Martin take you Davinia to be my wedded wife

I Davinia take you Martin to be my wedded husband

This is the legal promise or covenant that is the foundation of marriage. First that you are free to marry, not married to someone else. And two that you want to be married, to be wedded to each other. The rest of the vows that often made are:

For better for worse
For richer for poorer
In sickness and in health
To love and to cherish

These vows expand what it means to be married, to be in a covenantal relationship with another person is to stick with them through thick and thin, to care for them in sickness and to love them. It means putting up with annoying habits and celebrating even small things – on both sides.

One of the problems of the relationship with God that Jeremiah found was that the people of God had forgotten the basis of their relationship. So then the emphasis shifted away from being a faithful follower of God, to defining small matters of the law and what could work around the law. If a married person asks – do I need to care for my partner when they are sick from flu or is it just when it becomes pneumonia? We know the relationship is trouble. If God's people say – we know that you are the creator of the world, but we're going to pray to this golden cow for some rain as well, we know the relationship is in trouble.

God does not change, but through the prophet Jeremiah he speaks reminding his people that they have. He reminds them that through their broken relationship with him, their lives have become broken as individuals, families and as a nation. So much so that Israel is no longer called a nation here, but a people scattered across the earth.

But God is a restorer.

God looks at the house of Israel and of Judah, and picks through the rubble and has a vision of what it could look like. He doesn't dream of bi-folding doors and basement gym but dreams of a people followed God by their heart. He dreams of a people who don't follow him by law like a shopping list but one that flows out of their heart. To be in this kind of relationship with God is where we too say – I love the lord first, and then I work out the details of how that looks. I love the lord first for he is written on my heart. Our relationship with God ought to be one that starts in love, is surrounded in love, and one that never, ever ends for true love does not end.

The property developer who pours concrete into the back garden is only interested in profit and easy maintenance. The property developer who looks at the back garden and dreams of fruit trees, dappled shade and a table for feasting is the one who God looks most like. For the God who offers this new relationship is v28 one who will take care to plant and to build up. God the restorer doesn't want a new relationship with new terms, expanded arrangements and lengthy legal arrangements. God the restorer looks to rebuild the relationship he has with his people and for it to be fruitful. This relationship is one for growth.

God the restorer is like the developer who carefully strips back the layers of wallpaper,

decades of bad decisions, layer by layer. He strips woodwork warped by years of dodgy paint, he takes off the fake fireplace, and knocks through the wall to find the original one. God the restorer is making a new covenant with his people but it's based on an old love. This old love is the one that made the world, brought us into being and beckons us into relationship with him today.

God's tool for this process of restoration is forgiveness. Did you know that God loves you with a never-ending love? Did you know that his forgiveness for all that we have done that is not right is available to us now? For the God of restoration did not stop at Israel or Judah because v 34 all will know me.

At communion today we are reminded that God's restoration did not stop then either. As Jesus was sent by the Father to the world, he was sent to restore. He was sent to remind us of the God who loves us, and yearns for us to follow him. As Jesus dies and rises from death, he shows God's love of restoration to the maximum. As Jesus sent the Spirit to us, he now takes on the work of restoration in our lives today.

What might God want to restore in us today? Where might he plant? Or build us up? How might we need to know his forgiveness? God the restorer is present with us now as we share this meal together. His call to us is to have faith looking at the wreck of house before us for he has the hope of restoration and is calling us to be part of his restoration of the world and of our hearts. God is our restorer, may our hearts be restored by his hope.

Song: Restore us Lord
Our mouths they were filled, filled with
laughter
Our tongues they were loosed, loosed with
joy

Restore us, O Lord
Restore us, O Lord

Although we are weeping
Lord, help us keep sowing
The seeds of Your Kingdom
For the day You will reap them
Your sheaves we will carry
Lord, please do not tarry
All those who sow weeping will go out with
songs of joy
The nations will say, "He has done great
things!"
The nations will sing songs of joy
Restore us, O Lord
Restore us, O Lord

Communion

Prayers for the world

Song: Build your kingdom here
Let the darkness fear
Show Your mighty hand
Heal our streets and land
Set Your church on fire
Win this nation back
Change the atmosphere
Build Your kingdom here
We pray
Come set Your rule and reign
In our hearts again
Increase in us we pray
Unveil why we're made
Come set our hearts ablaze with hope
Like wildfire in our very souls
Holy Spirit, come invade us now
We are Your Church
And we need Your power
In us

We seek Your kingdom first
We hunger and we thirst
Refuse to waste our lives
For You're our joy and prize
To see the captive hearts released
The hurt, the sick, the poor at peace

We lay down our lives for Heaven's cause
We are Your church
And we pray revive
This earth (we're prayin' for revival)

*Build Your kingdom here
Let the darkness fear
Show Your mighty hand
Heal our streets and land
Set Your church on fire
Win this nation back
Change the atmosphere
Build Your kingdom here
We pray (change the atmosphere)*

Unleash Your kingdom's power
Reaching the near and far
No force of hell can stop
Your beauty changing hearts
You made us for much more than this
Awake the kingdom seed in us
Fill us with the strength and love of Christ
We are Your church
Oh, and we are the hope
On earth

Blessing