

*Christ Church New
Southgate & Friern Barnet*

2 October 2022

Welcome

Song: Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my
Father
There is no shadow of turning with Thee
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they
fail not
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be
Great is Thy faithfulness
Great is Thy faithfulness

Morning by morning new mercies I see
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me
Summer and winter and springtime and
harvest
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love
Great is Thy faithfulness
Great is Thy faithfulness

Morning by morning new mercies I see
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me
Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to
guide
Strength for today and bright hope for
tomorrow
Blessings all mine with 10, 000 beside
Great is Thy faithfulness
Great is Thy faithfulness

Prayer

Song: We've come to praise You
'Cause You're worthy
Nobody like You in Your glory

We love to praise You
'Cause You're holy, awesome
Wonderful, mighty God

Chorus

*And everything that You do
Comes from a heart of love
And a hand of mercy
For You are faithful and true
Working all things for good
For those who love You*

Bridge

For if God in love did not spare His Son
But He gave Him up for His chosen ones
How much more will He freely give to us
Who call upon His Name?

Song: *I'm gonna trust in God*

*I'm gonna trust in Jesus
Without shame and without fear
I'm gonna fix my eyes
On the hope of glory
For His day is drawing near*

How great is the love of God
How steady is His hand
To guide me through this world
And though I am weak in Him I stand
And you will hear me say today
In faith I'm gonna trust in God

Now when the cares of life
Seem overwhelming
And my heart is sinking down
I'm gonna lift my hands
To the One who'll help me
To the One who holds my crown

URC 50th Anniversary Quiz

Sermon: God of the maybe
Lamentations 3.19-33

There is an odd phrase in our passage of
scripture today. You see it in verse 29: Let

him bury his face in the dust, there may yet be hope.

There is a 'maybe' hope. I'm sure I've sung a thousand hymns that sing of the steadfast, sure and certain hope in times of trial, so what on earth is a 'maybe' hope?

This 'maybe' appears right across scripture and is also found in a similar Jewish phrase – 'perhaps' or 'who knows?'

In Exodus 32 when the people of God have been worshipping a golden baby cow instead of God, Moses finds out and says – perhaps or maybe I will ask God for your forgiveness. In Numbers 23, Balaam says to Balak – stay here in worship, while I go aside perhaps the lord will meet me. Caleb asks for Joshua's blessing in Joshua 14 for the Lord may be with him in battle. King David hearing his illegitimate child had died in 2 Samuel 12, says – who knows the lord may be gracious to me and the prophet Joel calls the people of God to return to God, who knows he says, in Joel 2, if he will relent and bless his people. Who knows? Perhaps? Maybe? Maybe there is hope?

The author of Lamentations is thought to be Jeremiah. The book is a selection of 5 poems about one topic – the destruction of Jerusalem in 586bc. The entire city was raised to the ground, the great warriors have fallen, the buildings are rubble, the people have been carried off into slavery in another land and the temple is destroyed. When Jeremiah says in verse 19 that he is wandering and afflicted, he means it. Some of us know only too well exactly how Jeremiah feels. Some of us are far from home, and all that was good has gone. Some of us have had our worlds turned upside down and there are simply no more tears. For anyone and everyone in despair, broken by life or even looking at the economic future of the UK, lamentations speaks for us. For anyone listening to the news, to this week 76 people dead in Iran for

protesting, 17 children and teachers in Ishevsk, Russia killed, devastation brought by hurricanes in Florida and Ebola starting again in Uganda, lamentations speaks to us.

As poetry, Jeremiah doesn't speak directly about his pain, his city destroyed, his identity crushed, but voices for us and for every person in pain – what it is like to be in pain. To lament is to weep or wail and it is in these days that lament is right. It gives words to the anguish of our hearts and expression to our grief. Lamentations spells out literally from a-z for every chapter is an acrostic poem what it is like to know pain and suffering. By speaking in poetry, he isn't telling us blow by blow of the fall of his city, he is helping all of us to say what it feels like when our city is down, when our friendships are broken, when our loved one is gone. Poetry connects us. Poetry means that 2500 years ago the destruction of a city can feel as real now as it did then, for it opens wide the suffering cry for all of us to grieve, all to acknowledge the mess we are in.

Barack Obama's book the audacity of hope speaks of a country broken by so many problems and yet driven forward by a dream, a hopeful dream that the mess we are in is not what the world is designed to be. A hope for Obama is in the common good, that life is not supposed to be bad, but good. The power of hope is that perhaps there is a chance for change for the American people.

Let the man bury his face in dust, the dust of the city that is in ruins. There may be hope.

Hope in what? An American dream? No. We hope in a person, the person of God. Hope in God who is steadfast in love, compassion and grace. God who does not delight in suffering. God who always wants his children to be happy and whole. God who wants to see justice, peace and his kingdom come in this world.

Maybe is a turn of the heart that has been broken, to lament and then be able to mutter – maybe, maybe there might be hope. Hope can be fragile; hope can be hard to verbalise but maybe there is a way forward.

‘Maybe’ speaks of a deep knowledge of God, a person shaped and formed by God. A person who has known God’s presence before, has seen God work in miraculous ways before. A person who knows that God always, always, always wants to protect and care for us. Always. But it also speaks of a person who knows that God is sovereign. God who has the world resting in his hands offering us freedom. Not a God who is squashing the world into his control, but a God who offers each of us a steadfast arm to lean on no matter what. God who makes the sun rise every day. God who made you and me. God who invites the world to believe in hope over despair, life over death, joy over mourning. God who calls us to try to see his new mercies every day. God who is lord over all the earth, and to whom one day every knee will bow and every tongue confess.

This God who is bigger than any of us can imagine. This God who is closer than any of us care to admit. This God whose glory fills the skies. To this God, the only God, when we are in despair: who knows? but God. Maybe there is hope tells us of God who does not like suffering in the world. Maybe there is hope calls us to believe we can hope even in dark days. Maybe, perhaps then we will see the kingdom of God here on earth. Who knows? Only the Lord. Great is his faithfulness.

Prayer for the world

Song: Oh, Lord hear my prayer
Oh, Lord hear my prayer
When I call answer me
Oh, Lord hear my prayer
Oh, Lord hear my prayer
Come and listen to me

Communion

Song: Jesus, be the centre
Be my source, be my light
Jesus
Jesus, be the centre
Be my hope, be my hope, be my song
Jesus

Be the fire in my heart
Be the wind in these sails
Be the reason that I live
Jesus, Jesus
Jesus, be the centre
Be my source, be my life
Jesus

Jesus, be the centre
Be my hope, be my song
Jesus
Be the fire in my heart
Be the wind in these sails
Be the reason that I live
Jesus, Jesus

Be the fire
In my heart
Be the wind in these sails
Be the reason that I live
Jesus, Jesus

Jesus (Jesus be my vision)
Jesus, be my vision
Be my path, be my guide
Jesus

Notices

Song: Great is Your faithfulness, o God
You wrestle with the sinner's heart
You lead us by still waters and to mercy
And nothing can keep us apart
So remember Your people
Remember Your children
Remember Your promise, o God

Your grace is enough
Your grace is enough
Your grace is enough for me

Great is Your love and justice, God
You use the weak to lead the strong
You lead us in the song of Your salvation
And all Your people sing along
So remember Your people
Remember Your children
Remember Your promise, o God

URC Blessing

Let us go out into the world
As bringers of love
As makers of peace
As messengers of hope
Knowing that the blessing of God
The source of life
Of Jesus Christ
The way to life and of the Holy Spirit
The sustain of life
Is with us today, tomorrow and forever.
Amen