

*Christ Church New Southgate
& Friern Barnet*

4 July 2021

Welcome

Song: High in the heavens, exalted,
name above all other names,
Lord over all of creation,
worthy of power and praise.
Blessing and honour and glory
are his eternal reward;
let every knee bow before him
and every tongue say he is Lord.

*Jesus, you are exalted and glorified.
Jesus, name above all names, we'll lift you high.*

Clothed in the splendour of heaven,
Jesus, eternally God,
emptied yourself, came as nothing,
choosing the road to the cross.
Lord, you were found in our likeness,
shedding your glory to serve;
humble, not claiming advantage,
you laid down your life for the world.

Let us be found in your likeness,
learning to serve as you served,
filled with your Spirit, your fullness,
the fragrance of grace on the earth.
You love the heart that is humble,
you desire worship that's true;
voices that sing for your glory
and lives that bring honour to you.

*Saviour, all of creation will bow in awe.
Jesus, from every nation we'll call you Lord,
to the glory of God. (repeat)*

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Psalm 48

¹ Great is the Lord, and most worthy of
praise,

**in the city of our God, his holy
mountain.**

² Beautiful in its loftiness,

**the joy of the whole earth,
like the heights of Zaphon^l is Mount Zion,
the city of the Great King.**

³ God is in her citadels;

**he has shown himself to be her
fortress.**

⁸ As we have heard,

**so we have seen
in the city of the Lord Almighty,
in the city of our God:**

God makes her secure
forever.

⁹ Within your temple, O God,
we meditate on your unfailing love.

¹⁰ Like your name, O God,
**your praise reaches to the ends of the
earth;
your right hand is filled with
righteousness.**

¹² Walk about Zion, go around her,
count her towers,

¹³ **consider well her ramparts,
view her citadels,
that you may tell of them
to the next generation.**

¹⁴ For this God is our God for ever and ever;
he will be our guide even to the end.

Reading: 2 Samuel 5.1-5, 9-10 by Chris Goodwin

5 All the tribes of Israel came to David at
Hebron and said, 'We are your own flesh
and blood.' ² In the past, while Saul was king
over us, you were the one who led Israel on
their military campaigns. And the Lord said
to you, "You shall shepherd my people
Israel, and you shall become their ruler."

³When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel.

⁴David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned for forty years. ⁵In Hebron he reigned over Judah for seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah for thirty-three years.

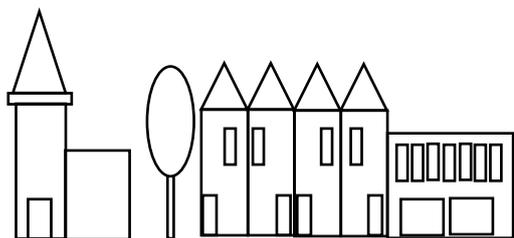
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⁹David then took up residence in the fortress and called it the City of David. He built up the area around it, from the terraces inwards. ¹⁰And he became more and more powerful, because the Lord God Almighty was with him.

Intercession - Praying for our city

Psalm 48.8 We have heard what God has done, and now we have seen it in the city of our God, the Lord Almighty; he will keep the city safe forever.

Can you add your home or a favourite place to this city? Write a prayer for your city, God is present here.



Sermon: Seeing God in the city

In my first church at Woolwich, we began to think about redeveloping the church building in line with other local developments. We had a 1960s building that leaked all the time. We had a hall and a sanctuary. Our architect asked us, would we consider a multi-purpose

sanctuary. His question was would it be ok to play basketball in the same space as you had Sunday services? It didn't go down well. Not because things might get broken, not because things might not get put back how we like them. Because the place itself was special. The building was not sacred, but what happened there was, as one person shared: 'This is the place where God speaks to us, this is the very footstool of the Lord's throne.'

In a similar way, the city of Jerusalem becomes a symbol for the people of God. The city is a symbol of God's presence in several different ways:

1/ The city reminds the people of David's leadership. For 7 short years he rules at Hebron, but in Jerusalem for 33 years. Called by God, anointed by God's prophet Samuel, asked by the tribes (2 Samuel 5.1), and asked by the elders (5.3) – please be our king, David was the most successful king ever in the history of Israel. He unites the north and the south and he brings together disparate and conflicted tribes together. This gathering of all the tribes of Israel, is a direct reminder of God's promise to Jacob that his sons would inherit the land of Israel that we know today. Confusingly – Jacob was also known as Israel.

2/ The city is also the location of the ark of covenant, and where David builds the temple. The ark of the covenant is that golden topped box with the tablets of stone with the law written on them that Moses gave to the people. This symbol of the law, is the way to engage with God, to follow him, to worship him. In this same city then is the worshipping heart of the people of God and the political heart of David's court.

3/ The city is a physical, tangible sign of God's protection and power. It is the Lord that enabled David to take the city, it is God's power that has given it to this new super king. It is in God's power that David builds, and he transforms the place. We might giggle at the

phrase 'consider her ramparts' but it points us towards a theological belief that God is like a fortress, a place of refuge, a safe place of protection. In a world where bandits lurked in the hills and empires and opposing forces were constantly threatening the people of God, a massive castle is a great reminder of God as a refuge.

Our reading from 2 Samuel also reminds us that the man David was called to be a leader of Israel, to be their shepherd. The Shepherd boy becomes a shepherd king. So not only does God provide a city as a refuge and symbol of protection, he also guides and cares for his people like a shepherd leads his sheep.

God is like a shepherd who cares for his sheep. God is like a city with walls to protect us. Which image do we prefer? If we say took a sample of Christian fridge magnets – how many might have 'the lord is my shepherd' and a fluffy sheep on them in comparison to 'Great is the Lord, in the city of our God' ? Do we prefer a countryside image or a city image to remind us of God? Well, I think David's anointing as King, reminds us of both. But I think we need to work on seeing God in our city. Now all of us will know of terrible things that happen in our cities, all of us will know of bad things that have happened to us in our city. But let us not romanticise the shepherd image of God, let's think creatively about God as our city refuge. For God is present in our city. God is present in ways that we don't always notice.

It was my white middle class eyes that looked at my first church and didn't consider the building special. But it was to my congregation, not the building itself but the space that it provided for all of us to engage with God. What do we find in our city of London that reminds us of God? We find incredible architecture – the shard pointing to heaven, we find the tube connecting everyone to everywhere, we find universities fostering knowledge in our young people, we find

businesses creating employment, we find life and energy in our city which surely reminds us of the lord? What do we see in the city? What do we hear? Do we see wonderful buildings to inspire us? Do we hear every language of the world to engage with? our city is not perfect at all, but may we look again and see despite all odds how our city is a refuge to the stranger, to those fleeing persecution? A refuge to those whose small villages cannot cope with difference in sexuality, gender, and opinion? A provider of work and meaning and hope? Is our city not a place of opportunity that reminds of every opportunity that the Lord gives?

What I learnt at Woolwich was this: God does not speak to us only in the middle of a field by a babbling brook, nor just at a big festival with a big-name speaker, God also speaks right here in the city through bricks and mortar, through buildings and bustling crowds, markets and trade. God is not in those things, but he can speak through them. God calls us in Psalm 48 to hear and to see the city. The pilgrims who sang this Psalm as they went to Jerusalem are powerfully reminded that God is strong, God is our refuge and God is our protector. Do we need to hear those words today? God is also living, breathing, creating and building. His life is one that grows and grows and grows everywhere including in the city.

Jean's funeral is next week. She chose her readings before she died, and they are Psalm 23, where the Lord leads and guides us despite what may come. And a less common choice – Revelation 21.1-5 where the new Jerusalem is seen. In this city, God will wipe every tear from their eye, there will be no more death or crying or pain, for the old order has passed away and the Lord is making everything new. May we look at our city with new eyes and new ears to see and hear all that God is doing now and may our cities resilience remind us of God's strength and

power. May we look ahead too to the heavenly city, where God is making all things new. For all that we see now is temporary, but God enables us to see flashes of the transcendent now as he builds his kingdom right here in his city. May we look again at our city and see and hear God at work in our lives.

Prayer

Guardian of the weak,
through the teachings of your prophets
you have claimed our cities, towns,
and homes as temples of your presence
and citadels of your justice.
Turn the places we live
into strongholds of your grace,
that the most vulnerable
as well as the most powerful among us
may find peace in the security
that comes in the strong name of Jesus
Christ. Amen.

Song: To You O Lord I lift up my soul
In you I trust O my God
Do not let me be put to shame
Nor let my enemies triumph over me

No one whose hope is in you
Will ever be put to shame
That's why my eyes are on you
Oh Lord Surround me, defend me
Oh how I need you
To you I lift up my soul
To you I lift up my soul

Show me your ways
and teach me your paths
Guide me in truth lead me on
For you're my God, you are my Saviour
My hope is in you each moment of the day

Remember Lord your mercy and love
That ever flow from of old
Remember not the sins of my youth
Or my rebellious ways
According to your love remember me

According to your love
For you are good O Lord
<https://www.grahamkendrick.co.uk/toyo...>

Communion

We gather at home and at church to
remember the God who leads, guides and
protects us.

In cities, countryside and every in-between,
wherever we are may we know God is our
refuge today.

As we share a meal together, we remember
Jesus sharing a final meal with his friends in
the city of Jerusalem.

We remember with heavy hearts the city
who turned against Jesus and acknowledge
our failures and faults as followers of Christ.

We remember the hill outside the city, where
Jesus laid down his life for his sheep.

We remember the city garden where Mary
found Jesus alive and asks her to spread the
good news.

We remember Jesus' life, death and
resurrection and his call to follow him
wherever we are.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Jesus, you took on humanity to make life in
God real. In your life, you helped us to
understand what it means to believe. You
showed us what it looks like to walk in paths
of righteousness. In your feeding and
healing, you sat your people in green
pastures feeding them the Bread of Life and
leading them to Living Water. You restored
their soul. You restore our soul.

Holy Spirit, you are made known in the
goodness and mercy that both leads us and
earnestly seeks us. In your goodness, you
comfort us with your presence and correct
us when we wander. In your mercy, you
show us how to return evil with love.

Holy Spirit, you are also the one whose presence at this table makes it more than just a few pieces of bread and a cup of grape juice. We pray that once again you would make this the Bread of Life and the Cup of the New Covenant – bringing us together in the house of the LORD – in this life and the one to come.

God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, we offer you are thanksgiving for all the ways you lead us. And recognizing your unity in one another we demonstrate our unity in you as we join our voices saying the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.

Share bread and juice

Intercession for God's world

Song: There's a love that seeks us,
love that will not leave us,
knows our deepest longing,
drives away our fear.
There's a God who holds us,
lovingly enfolds us;
we will lack for nothing,
trusting he is near.

*Our God, you're wonderful,
your love will never fail,
your goodness follows us through all our days.
Our God, you're wonderful
your love forever will be with us.*

There's a love that guides us,
walks the road beside us,
comforting, providing,
showing us the way.
Love will light the darkness,
where the valley's deepest,
lead us through the shadows
to a resting place.

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Blessing

May we see and hear God in our city

May we know Christ's love today

May we find the Spirit's life always