



Romans 1:16-17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

Hymn 154

*Great is your faithfulness, O God my Father,  
in you no shadow of turning we see;  
you never fail and your love is unchanging:  
as you have been you for ever will be.*

*Great is your faithfulness.  
great is your faithfulness,  
morning by morning new mercies we see;  
all we have needed your hand has provided:  
great is your faithfulness, Lord God, to me.*

*Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,  
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,  
join with all nature in unspoken witness  
to your great faithfulness, mercy and love.*

*Great is your faithfulness.  
great is your faithfulness,  
morning by morning new mercies we see;  
all we have needed your hand has provided:  
great is your faithfulness, Lord God, to me.*

We turn to our God once again: the ground of our life, the rock of our foundations, holding firm down myriad years; bearing in faithfulness the promises of old in the future of all.

***And so we would worship you, O God.***

***Christ the cornerstone of our hope standing with us, Holy Spirit inspiring us as we venture forth.***

***Come, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, come.***

Our lives are bereft without you.

Confront us, console us, call to us and go with us: our gathering is incomplete when we do not find you among us.

***Come, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, come.***

***Amen***

**Confession**

We are so often distracted by the attractions of things which seem significant in the smallness of our existence yet which quickly prove to have no real substance. We know that it is far easier to watch signs and wonders than to engage in the faithful and brave work which changes the world and moves the lives of people around us towards the household of your life which rests on the foundations of true and just community.

***Forgive us, O God. Bring us back to your Way, your Truth and your Life.***

When we do not really know your will with clarity and argue among ourselves about what it means to be faithful to you in our day, making judgements against others while being slow to examine ourselves:

***Forgive us, O God. Bring us back to your Way, your Truth and your Life.***

The faithfulness of God stands on everlasting foundations of grace, love and mercy. If we come in genuine humility God receives us without condemnation.

***Thanks be to God.***

We give thanks for the power of the witness of the Christ, O God, as it enlarges our lives through its ongoing stories and parables which call us constantly to reconsider our way forward. Continue to open us to those who bring the word of God to us in ancient and present witness opening us to transforming possibilities on our contemporary journey in faith.

**Hymn 260**     *He walked on earth showing glimpses of heaven;  
demons, death, disease had no hand.  
The wind and the waves were obedient before him:  
well may they say, who is this man?*

*Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away our sin,  
the light of the world, the Son of God.  
Worthy is the Lamb to receive our praise  
and glory and honour and power.*

*He turned not his face from our pain and destruction,  
he drank the bitter cup to the end;  
he who knew no sin took the punishment for us,  
deserted by God, man and friend*

*Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away our sin,  
the light of the world, the Son of God.  
Worthy is the Lamb to receive our praise  
and glory and honour and power.*

*On the third day he was raised up with glory,  
reigning on high, the risen Son: we have new life, a new hope, a new future;  
now we cry, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come!'*

*Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away our sin,  
the light of the world, the Son of God.  
Worthy is the Lamb to receive our praise  
and glory and honour and power.*

### **Hebrew Scriptures    The story of Noah and God's faithfulness**

Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark,

and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks. For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you to keep them alive. Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them." Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

And the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days.

In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth had dried out.

Then God said to Noah, "Go out from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by families from the ark. And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

**Genesis 6:9-22; 7:24; 8:14-19; 9:1**

In this is the word of the Lord.

**Gospel** Listen for the word in the Gospel of Saint Matthew

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name? And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching; for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

**Matthew 7:1-29**

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

## Reflection

Just what is faithfulness? In the first instance it is the very action of God to humankind. But specifically, it is the very action of God to us in our particular situation. And great **is** God's faithfulness! The story of Noah is certainly a case in point, powerful story that it surely is. But don't go off looking for the Ark because that is to miss the point of **the story**. That would be foolishness. For the response that the *story* should generate **in us** who are the faithful is our faithfulness. Jesus calls on people to *do* the will of God not to build their lives on the false foundations of a fantasy which will only collapse under pressure. Yes, it is easy in good times and circumstances to mouth words of faith

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you'.

There are indeed so many times when it is comfortable to see ourselves as God's people acting in God's name. But comfortable piety is so often no more than a smoke screen for failed faithfulness. Jesus is the one who calls on us to the commitment of word and action that was the epitome of his faithfulness to God; the faithfulness of realising that words and actions are to be the words and actions of people of the reign of God on earth; we are to be the faithful who enact love and grace to meet the needs of the world. The rock which lies under our faithfulness is the rock of loving our neighbour as ourselves, most of all in hard times and difficult circumstances when no mere words of consolation or hope for miracles is going to bring into effect real action and real change. The turmoil of our day brings the need for this faithfulness to the forefront in the harsh light of the multiplicity of human failings that are our heritage and, sadly, our ongoing legacy it would seem. We are yet again a generation that is not heeding the call to justice and mercy when and where it is desperately needed. Many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'

And then will I declare 'I never knew you'.

## Hymn 624

*Christ be my leader by night as by day;  
safe through the darkness, for he is the way.  
Gladly I follow, my future his care,  
darkness is day light when Jesus is there.*

*Christ be my teacher in age as in youth,  
drifting or doubting, for he is the truth.  
Grant me to trust him, though shifting as sand,  
doubt cannot daunt me; in Jesus I stand.*

*Christ be my Saviour in calm as in strife;  
death cannot hold me, for he is the life.  
Nor darkness nor doubting nor sin and its stain  
can touch my salvation: with Jesus I reign.*

## **Prayers for Ourselves and Others**

O God, who challenges every generation, as we try to be your faithful people, we long to live lives which stand strong on the rock of your eternal foundations for true life, life in all its fullness May we truly discern your will in our day.

***May our household of faith be a house embracing all, enlightened by the embrace of the truths of the gospel, set firmly on the solid rock of the life of Christ.***

We look at our troubled and threatened world seeking for signs that your reign is coming even in the darkness of our current day as we long for a new day where all will share in your gracious love and know God's faithfulness as a sure reality. So many people struggle even for survival and even minimal opportunity and care alienated from the more fortunate of the life of the world. We see the fragility of the fabric of societies as they go from crisis to crisis. We see justice demolished and torn down by the powerful forces of greed and selfishness and corruption of human making and also by disease and disaster. May we practise our faith by discerning your will for your Creation in all its manifestations, O God of faithfulness and grace.

***May our household of faith be a house embracing all, enlightened by the embrace of the truths of the gospel, set firmly on the solid rock of the life of Christ.***

Give us wisdom to know what is truly of You and what is founded only on superficial hopes and expectations, on our temptations towards privilege and prestige. In the hope of Your Kingdom breaking forth among us we pray the prayer Jesus taught us

***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.***

***Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.***

***For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.***

***Amen***

## **Hymn 689**

*Lord, hear my praying, listen to me;  
you know there is evil in what I see.  
I know I am part of all that is wrong:  
still won't you hear my sorrowing song.*

*Jesus, remind us that you are found  
with those who cry, with those who are bound;  
where there is suffering, you will be there –  
help us to follow: Lord, hear my prayer.*

## **Benediction**

The life of the Creator will surprise us with new things,  
the life of the Christ will invite us into the grandeur of faithfulness  
and the life of the Spirit will bless us forever. **Amen**

**Reverend Graeme Kerr**