



The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 1:17-23

Hymn 290

*Of the Father's love begotten
ere the world began to be,
he is Alpha and Omega,
he the source, the ending he,
of the things that are, that have been,
and that future years shall see
evermore and evermore.*

*This is he whom seers and sages
sang of old with one accord,
whom the voices of the prophets
promised in their faithful word;
now he shines, the long-expected:
let creation praise its Lord
evermore and evermore.*

*In the heights of heaven adore him,
angel hosts his praises sing,
all dominions bow before him
and extol our God and king;
let no tongue on earth be silent,
every voice together sing
evermore and evermore.*

God of imagination, God of diverse life expressed in humankind, trusting us with the precious life which flows from your endless creativity, hope beyond our hoping, calling us on to wider, greater being:

God with us and God before us, give us the confidence of your life within our own.

This we pray in the name of Jesus the Christ among us.

Amen

Confession

We are those whose faith is often challenged and we often simply hold onto the talents you have given to us. We are easily tempted to lay aside that which makes the greatest demands upon us. It is all too easy for us to hear and then delay from action. It is all too easy to turn our heads away from those we would rather ignore and the actions that would disrupt our lives and call us to real change and action.

Remind us of the commitment to which we are called as faith people and the hope that is ours in the Christ among us.

If we are tempted to set our own agendas for the exercise of faith and concentrate on the failings of others instead of our own weaknesses, looking in judgement rather than love and compassion while we go on in our own comfortable ways:

Remind us of the commitment to which we are called as faith people and the hope that is ours in the Christ among us.

If we have hardened our hearts and decided that people bring about their own troubles and neediness while we deserve our good fortune and prosperity through our own actions:

Remind us of the commitment to which we are called as faith people and the hope that is ours in the Christ among us.

Assurance

God does not give up on us or his creation. Every day is a new day for resurrection people. Every day in and through the Christ among us is a new day with new possibilities for renewal, new ways to live as kingdom people.

Thanks be to God.

We are called to a greater hope than we can ever imagine. You open to us dreams that we have not dreamt, pointing us to paths we have not previously taken. You go before us even as we wonder whether we have enough faith and commitment to truly be kingdom people.

Thanks be to you, O God in the Christ among us.

Amen

Hymn 159

*God whose farm is all creation,
take the gratitude we give;
take the finest of our harvest,
crops we grow that all may live.*

*Take our ploughing, seeding, reaping,
hopes and fears of sun and rain,
all our thinking, planning, waiting,
ripening into fruit and grain.*

*All our labour, all our watching,
all our calendar of care,
in these crops of your creation,
take, O God, they are our prayer.*

Gospel Matthew 25:31-46

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me. Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me. Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

This is the gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection

In our call to worship the words of Paul in Ephesians invite us to remember the hope to which we are called in the Christ among us. The Gospel reading makes clear what are the critical factors for living out that hope and practising kingdom living. Jesus reminds his followers that the hope is not simply about belief and mouthing commitment in our words. It is about acting out our faith by seeing God in every person, especially the most vulnerable, and loving them in practical and just ways as we share life with them. It is all too easy to focus on judging the morality of people as the path to salvation. But the perceiving that God is present in a needy stranger – outside the sanctuary and beyond those in whom we expect to see echoes of the Christ among us – is the strongest clarion call to all who would act out their faith, not simply intellectualise it.

Hymn 608

*Where cross the crowded ways of life,
where sound the cries of race and clan,
above the noise of selfish strife
we hear your voice, O Son of Man.*

*In haunts of wretchedness and need,
on shadowed thresholds dark with fears,
from paths where hide the lures of greed
we catch the vision of your tears.*

Prayers for Ourselves and Others and Lord's Prayer

O God, we pause in silent grieving as we think of all who are homeless, hungry, naked, lonely, oppressed and in pain and need. We can never name them all before you or even envisage them because they are numbered in millions far removed from our everyday living and in so many different places and situations. However, these are those who touch our hearts now. Hear, then our prayers for such as these now.

Hold these lives closer to ours. May we see you there within the longing and the weeping, Lord Jesus. May we be moved by an ongoing and faithful passion for change, for the restoration of true human community in our day, Holy Spirit within us.

Enter our trembling lives with all their uncertainties and failings that we may have the courage to recognise the truth, prepared to see and touch the reality in which others must live. May we embrace people who raise questions about the way we live and people who challenge us to discover anew the hope to which we are called in you, O Christ among us.

Hold us to commitment as we try to walk a different journey, treading behind

your leading into a transformation of the world.

For this we pray as your faithful people offering as our prayer the words you 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 for ever.***

Amen

Hymn 608

*The cup of water given for you
still holds the freshness of your grace;
yet long these multitudes to see
the sweet compassion of your face.*

*O Master from the mountainside
make haste to heal these hearts of pain;
among these restless throngs abide,
and tread the city's streets again:*

*Till all the world shall learn your love
and follow where your feet have trod,
till glorious from your heaven above
shall come the city of our God.*

Let us go in hope to share in the reign of the Christ as those who do not turn away from the needy lives of others.

Benediction

May we hear the voice of Jesus the Christ calling each of us from his reign deep within the life of our world. May we be lifted into new creativity by the Holy One of God and know the gifts of the Spirit for every challenging moment.

Amen

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