

**Dorset South & West. Written Service, Sunday 8th May 2022.
'Dealing With Rejection'. Prepared by Revd Jean Quick.**

Call to Worship.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. Psalm 23

StF 548 Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine.

Blessèd assurance, Jesus is mine:
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God;
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood:

This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.
This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
visions of rapture burst on my sight;
angels descending bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love:

Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Saviour am happy and blest -
watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with his goodness, lost in his love:

Frances Jane van Alstyne (Fanny Crosby) (1820-1915)

Prayers of Adoration and Confession*Based on STF 641*

Lord God how wonderful it is to have the assurance that when circumstances make our lives too hard to understand, no doubt or fear, no pain or strife, can snatch us from your hand.

We rejoice as the psalmist words remind us. We know that, in valleys where the path is steep, with shadows dark and long, we know the Shepherd leads his sheep. It is your grace that will keep us strong.

We rejoice that even if sorrow and perplexity are what we might feel,
Gethsemane and Calvary affirm God's love is real.

Forgive us for the times when we doubt your word.
Forgive us for the times when our lives do not reflect the trust and love you bestow upon us.

Help us to be ready to say, we rejoice, It is enough for us to know God's promise and God's care:
wherever on life's path we go our Saviour will be there. **Amen**

Gospel Reading : John 10: 22-30. Jesus Is Rejected by the Jews

At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.' Jesus answered, 'I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one.'

Reflection

How do you handle rejection?

Rejection can destroy our self-esteem and prevent us from accomplishing our God-given purposes in life. It can happen in many forms. For instance, you might be passed over at work for a promotion you deserved. Or a group of people rejected your presence or your ideas. Whatever the case, we've all experienced some kinds of rejection and we know it hurts.

Some rejections are easier to cope with. "Sorry we can't come to tea this weekend but next weekend is ok". That sort of simple 'not yet' is usually ok. However when you have put your heart and soul into something and you feel you're on the right path. Now that is harder to accept. Or indeed to respond to in the right manner.

When you reject a person, it shows him or her that they are unacceptable, of no value, doesn't belong, unwanted, can't fit in and unloved.

In our gospel reading Jesus is rejected. Indeed rejection is a major theme of this chapter, and is reflected in the hostility of "the Jews" who challenge Jesus to "tell us plainly".

I would be exasperated at this point and would want to say quite forcefully, "how many more times or ways do I have to spell it out for you!"

Or maybe I might have slunk off feeling like their rejection is just too much. Like those horrible moments of picking who and who wouldn't be on the team. Feeling left out and dejected because you weren't picked.

The passages that immediately precede and follow this text (vv. 19-21 and 31-39) deal explicitly with that rejection, although they also make clear that "the Jews" are divided—some saying that Jesus has a demon (v. 20) and others saying, "These are not the sayings of one possessed by a demon. So how does Jesus handle this rejection?

Jesus didn't run from rejection. Isaiah 53:3-4 reminds us: "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of suffering who knew what sickness was. He was like someone people turned away from; He was despised, and we didn't value Him. Yet He Himself bore our sicknesses, and He carried our pains; but we in turn regarded Him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted."

Jesus knew God always has a purpose for the pain, and because of that truth, He willingly embraced it. The gospel message is that Jesus endured rejection so that we can have abundant life. But His sacrifice must be applied in order for that life to take effect.

In your own seasons of pain, know this one truth: You are not alone. Jesus sees. He knows. He cares. He's been there. And because He has suffered, He offers a comfort not merely rooted in intellectual assent but in compassionate understanding. Through His death, Jesus secured our pardon. Through His resurrection, He secured our daily hope. He is the promised Messiah who not only came for us but also remains as our lifeline and assurance.

Rejection of Christ is as common today as it was then. Observe how the church is portrayed in films and on television. Rarely is it treated sympathetically. Usually Christians are portrayed as negative and judgmental or are made the butt of a joke. Look at how the newspapers report on the Christian church. Christian festivals are watered down to family feasts by high street advertising.

In many nations even today, Christians are actively persecuted and martyred for their faith.

Our text reminds us, no one can snatch them from the Father's hand. We don't need to fear those that reject Christ. The most serious enemies of Christ are those who wear his name badly. Who claim to be following Christ but their deeds and words are anything but Christlike.

The security that Jesus offers is not security as the world understands security. The sheep will not perish and no one will snatch them out of Jesus' hand, but many will die for their faith—or lose their jobs—or be denied opportunity—or suffer ridicule. What they will not lose is their relationship to the Father and the Son or the salvation that relationship brings.

Knowing we can never be rejected by God should help us to have a more accepting manner towards others? Are we guilty of rejecting others for reasons that should be,..... rejected!

Do you remember when vending machines came into being? I remember as a child pleading with my Dad for a treat from the machine. Not because I wanted the treat, but the fun of watching the mechanics selecting and dropping the item into the collection bin. I guess my Dad always made it fun too. He to his dying day called the bank's cash machine 'prize every time'.

When we think of technology and those devices they are great until they reject your coin or card because it's got a slight imperfection or blemish. It's different to what it's reader can accept. We rage and fume over it as if it were human and could overlook the difficulties or differences.

We are not machines we can evaluate and adapt to differences so why do we act as if we are programmed to reject anything or anyone who doesn't fit into our way of thinking? The gospel challenges us to be open to all and to accept those who Christ accepts.

I love the thought that no one can be snatched from the fathers hand, but could my rejection of someone be my, thank God, futile attempt to snatch them from the Fathers hand?

STF 255 The kingdom of God is justice and joy.

The kingdom of God
is justice and joy,
for Jesus restores
what sin would destroy;
God's power and glory
in Jesus we know,
and here and hereafter
the kingdom shall grow.

The kingdom of God
is mercy and grace,
the prisoners are freed,
the sinners find place,
the outcast are welcomed
God's banquet to share,
and hope is awakened
in place of despair.

The kingdom of God
is challenge and choice,
believe the good news,
repent and rejoice!
His love for us sinners
brought Christ to his cross,
our crisis of judgement
for gain or for loss.

God's kingdom is come,
the gift and the goal,
in Jesus begun,
in heaven made whole;
the heirs of the kingdom
shall answer his call,
and all things cry glory
to God all in all!

Bryn Rees (1911-1983)

Prayers for others:

Who do we want to pray for and who should we be praying for?

Let our response to each prayer be:

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love, show us how to serve the neighbours we have from you.

Kneels at the feet of his friends. We might say, 'so called friends', the ones who would desert you in your hour of need. Or sell you for a bag of silver. Yet you silently wash their feet!

We pray for all who feel rejected in anyway. For those who are put down and made to feel worthless. Those who in today's idiom are 'gaslighted'. People held in abusing relationships or work situations. Help them to feel their true worth and to break free from their oppressors.

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love, show us how to serve the neighbours we have from you.

Neighbours are rich folk and poor, neighbours are black folk and white, neighbours are nearby and far away. We pray for all who are in the news today and in need. Help us to reach out to them through our prayers and whatever action we can offer.

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love, show us how to serve the neighbours we have from you.

Help us to discern with the eyes of faith who are the ones we should serve. To see that love should not have preferences or boundaries. To recognise that the ones we should love are neighbours to us and you. The world is so complex and it's difficult to understand how to cope with the things that are happening in and around us. We pray for all in government or positions of power that they will act justly to all people.

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love, show us how to serve the neighbours we have from you.

Kneel at the feet of our friends, silently washing their feet, this is the way we should live with you. We thank you for the many care givers in our world. Whether in hospitals, aid agencies, refugee centres. We pray for all involved in what ever way who silently and symbolically wash the feet of the sick and needy.

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love, show us how to serve the neighbours we have from you.

We take a moment to offer our own prayers for others and our concerns to God and when you are ready...
We say the Lord's Prayer. Our Father.....

STF 685

In Christ there is no east or west,
in him no south or north,
but one great fellowship of love
throughout the whole wide earth.

In him shall true hearts everywhere
their high communion find;
his service is the golden cord
close-binding humankind.

Join hands then all the human race,
whate'er your nation be;
all children of the living God
are surely kin to me.

In Christ now meet both east and west,
in him meet south and north;
all Christlike souls are one in him,
throughout the whole wide earth.

John Oxenham, pseud. (1852-1941)

The Blessing

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. **Amen**