

# The Bride Valley Service for Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2021

*We will light a candle in church, you may wish to do the same at home if it is safe*

Welcome to this service of celebration: Today we celebrate the Blessed Virgin Mary, we celebrate with her, we sing and rejoice with her. Here in the Bride Valley, we have three churches dedicated to Mary. At Burton Bradstock, at Litton Cheney and at Puncknowle.

## **Psalm 45 v 17**

I will cause your name to be celebrated in all generations; therefore, the peoples will praise you forever and ever.

### **Hymn: Tell out my soul.**

1 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!  
Unnumbered blessings, give my spirit voice;  
tender to me the promise of his word;  
in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.

3 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might!  
Powers and dominions lay their glory by.  
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,  
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

2 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his Name!  
Make known his might, the deeds his arm has done;  
his mercy sure, from age to age the same;  
his holy Name, the Lord, the Mighty One.

4 Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word!  
Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure.  
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord  
to children's children and for evermore!

*Timothy Dudley-Smith (born 1926) from Luke 1 vs46-55 © administered by Oxford University Press in Europe (including UK and Ireland) and Africa, and by Hope Publishing Company in all other territories (including USA) CCLI Licence 2370586*

**Invitation to confession:** When the Lord comes, he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness, and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Therefore, in the light of Christ let us confess our sins.

**O King enthroned on high, filling the earth with your glory: holy is your name, Lord God almighty. In our sinfulness we cry to you to take our guilt away, and to cleanse our lips to speak your word, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

May God our Father forgive us our sins and bring us to the eternal joy of his kingdom, where dust and ashes have no dominion. **Amen.**

### **Collect**

Almighty God, who looked upon the lowliness of the Blessed Virgin Mary and chose her to be the mother of your only Son: grant that we who are redeemed by his blood may share in the glory of your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

### **Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 61.10-end**

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

### **New Testament Reading: Galatians 4.4-7**

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

## Gospel Reading: Luke 1.46-55

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

## Reflection

On this Sunday the Church invites us to set aside our cycle of readings, the lectionary and concentrate instead on the person of Mary, chosen and called to be the mother of Jesus Christ our Lord, and someone who has had a profound influence on the way in which Christians down the centuries have developed their thinking about the nature of God. Mary has evoked huge devotion from generations of Christian disciples, and has inspired painters, sculptors and musicians to produce some of the most beautiful works of art of all time.

Some traditions in the Christian Church venerate Mary and ascribe to her a share in the redeeming work of her Son, using titles such as Co-Redemptrix, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and so on. Others are wary of this kind of language and draw attention to the fact that the references to Mary in the New Testament are very few in number, and none of them suggest that she was anything other than a person of humble background, who nevertheless had the courage and faith to obey the call of God to give birth to a son, and to give him the name Jesus – Saviour. It is to St Luke that we owe our principal knowledge of Mary, and although the details which he gives us about her are scant indeed, he does put on her lips one of the best known and best loved songs of praise in the Bible, generally called the Magnificat (from the Latin translation of the opening words: Magnificat anima mea Dominum – My soul magnifies the Lord).

But what does the word 'magnify' mean in this context? Its usual meaning is to enlarge or make greater, but how is it possible to do this to the Lord himself? Some have compared the phrase to the call in several parts of the Old Testament, especially the Psalms, to 'give glory to God', but again, what does this mean? How is it possible to give God any more glory than he already has? How is it possible to make God greater than he already is?

What is to my mind a very helpful answer to these questions is found in a book by the theologian Paula Gooder called 'Journey to the Manger', in which she looks in depth at the accounts of Jesus's birth in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, as well as the other material in the New Testament concerning his incarnation. When commenting on 'My soul magnifies the Lord' she writes this.

*God is great, and remains great whether we worship him or not. He is glorious, and remains glorious whether we worship him or not. We do not change God's state when we worship him. Instead we change both our relationship with him and his repute in the world. Mary's statement that she 'enlarged God' was a statement about God's importance in her own life and estimation, not an absolute statement about who God was. Our calling in worship is constantly to be seeking to make God's impact on our lives greater and more significant, and the impact of other things smaller and less significant. In a sense Mary's opening phrase 'My soul magnifies the Lord' reminds us powerfully of what worship is all about.*

All this reminds me of the words of John the Baptist in relation to Jesus, that "he must increase, and I must decrease". This does not mean that we are called upon to belittle ourselves, much less indulge in a false modesty or (worse) a contempt for ourselves and our hopes and needs. On the contrary, we are given grace to magnify the Lord precisely because he magnifies us – or rather, he pours upon us the full extent of his love, and assures each of us that we are precious in his sight. "Even the hairs of your head are counted", promises Jesus, thus indicating that our tiniest concerns and hopes and fears are known to him. The same God who gave Mary grace to become the mother of his Son will equip us for whatever he calls us to do and to be. Like Mary, then, let us magnify the Lord, and with her let us declare that "my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour".

## **Affirmation of faith**

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

## **Prayers of Intercession**

We pray for the family of the church, for loving relationships and for the life of families around us.

Jesus, Lord of love: **hear our prayer**

Jesus, born in poverty and soon a refugee, be with families today who are poor and live in hunger and want.

Jesus, Lord of love: **hear our prayer**

Jesus, as you grew in wisdom and in favour with God and the people in the family of Joseph the carpenter, bring wisdom and the presence of God into the work and growth of families today ...

Jesus, Lord of love: **hear our prayer**

Jesus, as you blessed marriage in the wedding at Cana, be with those preparing for marriage and with those who come to the end of their resources ...

Jesus, Lord of love: **hear our prayer**

Jesus, as you healed Peter's mother-in-law, bring healing to those in our families who are ill today ...

Jesus, Lord of love: **hear our prayer**

Jesus, when you were dying you called Mary and John to care for one another: provide today for those who lose their families: the bereaved and childless, orphans and widows ...

Jesus, Lord of love: **hear our prayer**

Jesus, as you ate breakfast on the beach with your disciples after you were raised from the dead, bring the whole Church on earth and in heaven into your risen presence to eat at the eternal banquet, Jesus, Lord of love, in your mercy, hear us, accept our prayers and be with us always. **Amen.**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**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 forever. Amen.**

## Final hymn: Be thou my vision

1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,  
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;  
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,  
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

2 Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,  
be thou ever with me, and I with thee Lord;  
be thou my great Father, and I thy true son;  
be thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.

3 Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;  
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;  
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:  
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.

4 Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise:  
be thou mine inheritance now and always;  
be thou and thou only the first in my heart;  
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

5 High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright sun,  
O grant me its joys after victory is won;  
great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

*Irish, c 8th century translated by Mary Byrne (1880-1931) versified by, Eleanor Hull (1860-1935) © Revived Copyright Holder Unknown CCLI Licence 2370586*

Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary,  
**Revealed in his glory,**  
Worshipped by angels,  
**Proclaimed among the nations,**  
Believed in throughout the world,  
**Exalted to the highest heavens.**  
Blessed be God our strength and our salvation,  
**Now and forever. Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord:  
**Thanks be to God.**  
**Blessing, honour and glory be yours,**  
**here and everywhere, now and forever. Amen.**

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