

## Sunday 7 August - Rev Jean Hudson

### Opening Prayer

Thank you, Creator God, for summer's warmth and light, your gift

### Help us to joy in the promise of each day

Thank you, Jesus, for summer's peace and stillness, your gift

### Help us to rest in the beauty of each day

Thank you, gentle Spirit, for summer's colour and life, your gift

### Help us to thrive in the hope of each day

Holy Trinity, dynamic and loving, we thank you for seasons and cycles

### But especially for today, in this season of summer

### Hymn: StF134 Christ, whose glory fills the skies

[https://youtu.be/Xvni-t\\_71-k](https://youtu.be/Xvni-t_71-k)

Let us pray together

Wherever we are, vibrant God, please colour our days with love and gladness. Gladness because before we ever approach you, you hold us in mercy, forgiveness and grace, free gifts in and through Jesus, our Saviour and travelling Companion. We thank you and we give ourselves to you in joy. In Jesus' name. Amen.

### Today's Reading from the Old Testament:

**Zechariah 4: 1, 6-10 – a vision for rebuilding the Temple on return from exile**

### Today's Gospel Reading: Matthew 13: 31-33

### Time to Reflect

We must not despise the day of small things. During the pandemic small things became so important that they shaped how we lived each day – small journeys, small walks, small ways to keep in touch with family and friends, small visits to essential shops. Thankfully, for most of us in this country those days seem to be over. There are some, however, who are still vulnerable, grateful for areas specifically for those who want to wear a mask. And in parts of the world, covid is still rampant.

Now, there is something else in our world reminding us to be thankful for everyday gifts with which God blesses our lives – light, silence, beauty, clean water, the laughter of children, family celebrations. As I write this in May, in Ukraine the sounds of war drown out any possibility of rest or happiness. 'There is no safe haven here' – haunting words from BBC reporter, Fergal Keane in Lviv.

The everyday small sounds and possibilities of our lives fill us with profound thankfulness and we can use them as a foundation to our everyday prayers, remembering how Jesus used them to teach us of God. The ordinary items we have in our homes remind us that all of our life is important to God. Every action we take as a day unfolds from waking up to going to bed provides us with a nudge to pray and invite the Spirit to fill our days with thanksgiving and love. Small everyday sights and sounds remind us of

a world full of joy and delight. Our everyday hopes and dreams open up the promise of new experiences filled with the grace of God and the presence of Jesus.

All is gift, all is grace, neither contentment nor suffering is of our deserving. A silent Thank you and a silent outpouring of love for all who do suffer – everywhere – can be our response to the God who loves us all.

*Take time to sit quietly*

### A time of prayer

Gracious and merciful God, there is much in your world to cause deep concern and anxiety, not least the war in Ukraine, from which we receive reports and profoundly disturbing pictures of suffering that should never happen. We pray for an end and ask that the people still there, grieving and many wounded, and those now living elsewhere will be able to keep faith that there will be an end. As our tears are joined with yours, Lord, in your mercy

### Hear our prayer

Just and holy God, we pray for integrity to be reclaimed in politics, in our own country as well as elsewhere. In dealings with refugees and asylum seekers, keeping the way open for peaceful government in Northern Ireland, the desire for Scottish independence and the real cost of living crisis for thousands of families, may we be able to trust our leaders to be honest and compassionate. As our yearnings for justice, safety, dignity and enough for all are joined to yours, Lord, in your mercy

### Hear our prayer

Generous and saving God, we thank you for all who see need in our world and give unstintingly of time, energy and love to help to meet it. Provision of food, safe havens, transport, sport and play for all abilities, places to journey through grief to name but a few in the hands of volunteers who embody compassion. Thank you for all of them. As our dreams for fullness of life for all are joined to yours, Lord, in your mercy

### Hear our prayer.

We bring our prayers together in the prayer Jesus taught us..

### The Lord's Prayer

**Hymn: StF431 O, the love of my Lord is the essence**  
<https://youtu.be/v7H6CZIKL68>

**or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind**

### A prayer of blessing

May the love of the Father surround us  
may the grace of the Son fill us  
may the energy of the Spirit lift us  
so that we might build the kingdom of God.

## Sunday 14 August - Rev Keith Burchell

### Opening Prayer

May the words of our mouths and the thoughts of our minds be acceptable to you,  
O Lord, our strength and redeemer. Amen.

**Hymn: StF334** Praise to the Holiest in the height  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAAz\\_iWp6vE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAAz_iWp6vE)

Let us pray together

### Prayer of adoration:

Loving God, wherever we are,  
wherever we go, you are there.  
You created the world to be our home  
and our place of journeying.  
Your glory shines through the world  
and yet far transcends it.  
Loving God, we praise you, Creator of the World.

Loving God, wherever we are,  
wherever we go, you are there.  
You sent your only Son to be our guide,  
our companion and our saviour.  
Your love shines through his life.  
Your love has conquered death.  
Loving God, we praise you,  
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Loving God, wherever we are,  
wherever we go, you are there.  
You have sent your Holy Spirit to warm our hearts,  
to challenge and encourage us.  
Your power shines through your people.  
Your power unites them in love.  
Loving God, we praise you,  
Giver of the Holy Spirit. Amen

### Meditation:

The apple shone among the leaves, glinting in the sunlight. The new-made world smelt soft and fresh. All was relaxed, nothing to strive for, totally laid back.

The apple glinted like a knife just out of reach on a table-top. 'Don't touch, child Adam, child Eve. That hard, sharp knife, though of infinite use, can cut and scar and maim.'

The apple shone among the leaves. Its radiance burnt into their hearts; its fragrance excited their every thought. Child Eve reached up, picked it, ate it. And it was very sharp.

### Readings from the Old & New Testament

Genesis 3:1-15      1-Corinthians 3:16-17

### Time to Reflect

If you read chapter 1&2 of Genesis before today's reading you will find: A high point – humans made in the image of God; then a low point – humans made from the dust of the earth. And now in chapter 3 there are the tensions when you put the two views together! The high point was the special **knowledge** needed to care for the earth and the animals. Now we get Adam and Eve in the garden with the serpent wanting to know more. Knowledge is a powerful

thing: it can be used for good but also for evil. (Chemistry can be used to make pain killers, but also to make bombs.) Knowledge can also be a burden – we know we shall get old and die, but not enough to prevent it (if we wanted to!). We cannot keep the innocence of early childhood.

How do we get knowledge? One way is trial and error. Tell children not to do something, and they want to do it (like Adam and Eve!)

If it goes wrong it can be disastrous, but often not. The serpent was right – they didn't die; well not yet – Adam was still fathering sons at age 105! See chapter 5.

This story is often taken as a story of how sin came into the world: they did wrong, the man blames the woman, the woman blames the snake. But are there other interpretations, as the Hebrew translated *crafty* could also be translated *clever* or *prudent*, which do not have sinister undertones. Likewise Eve is often translated as Adam's *helper* but it could be *partner*, which implies an equality of status, rather than a subordinate.

So Eve wants to learn. She has more curiosity than Adam. She is willing to try things, and take risks. And the snake asks a question – is it evil to ask questions?

Like Adam & Eve in the story wanting to learn, in our journey of life we have to learn and discover, re-learn and re-discover our dependence on God, and our knowledge of God; and we of course as Christians learn it through Jesus Christ.

*Take time to sit quietly*

### A time of prayer -

*The world is God's temple.*

Let us pray for the world:

- for the powerful, that they may know that the world belongs not to them but to the God of love and justice;
- for the powerless, that they may know that God is alongside them in their hunger, fear and suffering. (Silence)

*The church is God's temple.*

Let us pray for the church:

- for its leaders, that they may guide their people and the world to worship in word and deed;
- for the different denominations, that in unity they may come to know and worship the one, undivided God. (Silence)

*We are God's temple.*

Let us pray for ourselves:

- for churches meeting in buildings, that they and we may become sanctuaries for the lonely, the worried and the sad, peoples of love and hope;
- for each one of us, that our lives may be hymns of worship to the eternal God, sung in confidence and joy. (silence)

In the name of our High Priest, Jesus Christ. **Amen**

*The Lord's Prayer Our Father .....*

**Hymn StF 618 Sacred the Body**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6NNs9WSIL4>

**Prayers of offering and a blessing:**

Generous God,  
Out of love you created all that is;  
Out of love you created humankind;  
Out of love you save us  
    from the consequences of our sin.  
Out of love, we offer you ourselves  
    and all that we have.  
Accept them and us, in the name of the second  
Adam, your Son, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

God, the Creator, fill you with joy.  
God, the Redeemer, fill you with hope.  
God, the Comforter, fill you with peace. And the  
blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with  
you, now & evermore. Amen.

The prayers are from *Companion to the Lectionary Volume 5*,  
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## **Sunday 21 August – Pat Heynes**

We come to God with our longings:  
Our heavenly Father knows them all.  
We come to God with our burdens;  
Our heavenly Father holds them all.  
We come to God alone or together  
The Holy Spirit is here for us all. AMEN

**Hymn: StF175, Light of the World**

<https://youtu.be/CBKzCpkXJR4>

**Let us pray together**

Eternal and generous God,  
thank You for Your many gifts to us –  
not least the gift of Your Son  
who in turn gave His own life for the life of the world.  
Help us we pray, to live as generously:  
ready to offer time, energy  
and all we have and are,  
for Your kingdom's sake. AMEN

**Today's Reading from the Old Testament**

Isaiah 58: v 13-14

**Today's Gospel Reading:** Luke 13: 10-17

**Time to Reflect**

What is the story from Luke really about?  
Jesus healing on the Sabbath and upsetting the  
synagogue leaders,  
or Jesus healing a woman who had spent 18 years in  
pain without being offered any help by the synagogue  
leaders.

God wants his people to celebrate their faith by  
acting justly in the world, whoever they are dealing  
with, wherever they are, and whenever the  
opportunity arises.

Are there people in our community who we have  
known for long periods and ignored, as the woman  
in Luke's story had been ignored until Jesus came  
along?

As they reach out to us for practical help can we  
identify and try to meet their need? Can we achieve a  
result this week?

Isaiah suggests that doing just that will bring joy both  
to us and the Lord.

*Take time to sit quietly*

**A time of prayer**

We pray for those who are in the news today,  
whether willingly or not.....  
for those awaiting a home not of their choosing, for  
those fighting a war not of their making and for those  
struggling to keep a family together around poverty  
not of their creating.

We pray for those who we've met or talked to in the  
last day or so who have some important issue to  
face.

Especially we pray for any situations faced by our  
own family and friends...

We pray for those who are waiting – for something  
important – a visit, an appointment, a word of  
kindness.

Especially we pray for anyone who may be longing for  
love, friendship and a way out of loneliness.

We pray for those whose lives are not content, but  
who have not yet found their home in you. We ask for  
the gift of your faith to be given to them.

Father, every person we have thought of in our hearts  
is known and loved by you far more than we can ever  
imagine. We entrust them to you in confidence and  
hope, knowing that you will hear our prayers for their  
healing and well-being.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ who  
is alive forever with you and the Holy Spirit.

**The Lord's Prayer**

*Our Father .....*

**Hymn: Listen to StF395 Spirit of the living God  
or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DtJgaGRav4>

**A prayer of blessing**

May the grace of God the Father  
Console our hearts,  
May the love of Christ the Son  
surround and uphold us,  
May the breath of the Holy Spirit  
Blow us into passionate fire  
and may God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit  
give us strength to do this week's work.  
AMEN

## **Sunday 28 August – Stephen Mosedale**

We come to worship a wonderful God.  
We come not as slaves, but as the truly free;  
not as petitioners, but as those already heard;  
not as interlopers, but as invited guests.  
Though we may be in dispersed locations,  
the love of Christ gathers us together,

joyful and eager to worship.

**Hymn: Meekness and Majesty** (StF 362)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-8rmvWNplo>

### Prayer

Lord of infinity, who also chose meekness and humility in Jesus, we worship you.

You are the Lord of this morning, whether it greets us with a burst of sunshine or refreshing showers, and the simple pleasures that delight our taste and smell, our hearing and our seeing, are also your gift to us and all creation.

We thank you that in worship we are never alone, but share with countless others in the music that heaven also enjoys, in the challenge of your Word, in the privilege of prayer, in the comfort of Christian fellowship.

Thank you, generous God, for this Lord's Day, and all that it speaks to us of your providence and your grace. **Amen.**

**Today's OT Reading: Proverbs 25:6-7**

**Today's Gospel Reading: Luke 14:1, 7-11**

### Time to Reflect

Formal dinners have been in short supply the last couple of years, but we all remember an occasion like a wedding where the seating plan enabled us to know our place, and perhaps also to judge our social standing on the basis of how far from the top table it was!

It was a trickier business for Jesus's contemporaries, who had to judge in relation to the other guests how close to the host their status dictated they should be.

Everyday wisdom, shown in those verses from Proverbs, dictated that it was far better for one's street cred to aim low and be promoted than high and get relegated to the margins.

"Pride goes before a fall" our own proverb says. Two ducks and a frog were great friends in the farm pond they shared. But one really hot August it was drying up. No problem for the ducks who could fly off and find another, but that was too far for the frog to jump. They hatched a plan. The ducks would fly side by side holding the ends of a stick in their beaks whilst the frog with its powerful jaws would hang from the middle. It worked so well that a farmer looking up exclaimed aloud, "What a good idea. I wonder who thought of that?". "I did", croaked the frog!

Pride comes before a fall. But Luke sees the words of Jesus here as a "parable" (verse 7), so it is not just advice on keeping up appearances. It is about life in the Kingdom where God is the host. It is God who decides our place. Genuine humility is not about calculating how to look good; it is simply desiring that God should determine our place.

George Whitefield and John Wesley disagreed on several points. A man who loved stirring controversy once asked Whitefield if he thought he would see

Wesley in heaven. "I fear not", Whitefield replied, "for he will be so near the eternal throne and we at such a distance, we shall hardly get sight of him."

If we are willing to receive the teaching of Jesus as disciples we shall be free from the world's obsession with posturing for position.

*Take time to sit quietly*

*Reflect on what humility means in your life.*

### A time of prayer

Lord, it is your call that gives us dignity and we would be nothing without you. We pray for true humility in your Church. We remember all who evangelize or serve in areas of poverty, apathy or animosity, and all who face humiliation for their faith. We pray for ministers who have lost their way, narrowed in their focus, succumbed to the temptation to self-aggrandisement, and for all believers who no longer fulfil their vocation. Make us all worthy of our calling.

We pray for people we categorise as "home-less" or "destitute", but who are individuals as valuable in your eyes as anyone, and more precious in their vulnerability.

And we pray for those who care for them and seek to make accessible to them the opportunities they long for.

We remember church-based community workers who on behalf of us all, but not in our stead, share good news with the poor.

Make us all worthy of our calling.

We remember all who are belittled by others, who lack confidence in themselves, who are timid and nervous.

We ask your blessing on those who live with the hostility of war, oppression or abuse.

We pray for sick and struggling people whom we know individually.

And we acknowledge that we also need your healing for we are not yet perfect in love.

Make us all worthy of our calling.

Father, we thank you that you invite us and accept us into your kingdom, that through Christ you have triumphed over death.

We remember our loved ones in eternity.

May we too be found faithful to your call, in Jesus's name, who encouraged us to pray:

### Our Father....

**Hymn: Show me how to stand for justice** (StF 713)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I8CIU66oFMQ>

*Or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind*

### A prayer of blessing

As our worship continues through our service of Jesus Christ during this week, may he who is the same yesterday, today and forever fill us with his peace and joy. **Amen.**