

## Written service for Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2021

### Call to worship Psalm 48. 14

For this God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide, even to the end.

**HP 31** Come, let us all unite and sing – God is love!

Come, let us all unite and sing - God is love!  
Let heaven and earth their praises bring - God is love!  
Let every soul from sin awake, let every heart sweet music make,  
and sing with us for Jesus' sake - God is love!

O tell to earth's remotest bound - God is love!  
In Christ we have redemption found - God is love!  
His blood has washed our sins away, his Spirit turned our night to day,  
and leads our souls with joy to say - God is love!

How happy is our portion here - God is love!  
His promises our spirits cheer - God is love!  
God is our sun and shield by day, by night he near our tents will stay;  
He will be with us all the way - God is love!

In Zion we shall sing again- God is love!  
Yes, this will be our highest strain - God is love!  
While endless ages roll along, in concert with the heavenly throng,  
This shall be still our sweetest song - God is love!  
Howard Kingsbury c.1850

### Prayer of Adoration

Blessed are you, Lord our God: in your love you create all things out of nothing through your eternal world. We glorify you and adore you.

Blessed are you, Lord our God: in your love you redeemed the world through our Lord Jesus Christ. We glorify you and adore you.

Blessed are you, Lord our God: in your love you empower your people through the gift of your Holy Spirit. We glorify you and adore you. Amen

### Prayer of Confession

Most merciful God, we confess to you before the whole company of heaven that we have sinned in thought, word and deed, and in what we have failed to do.

*Silence*

Forgive us our sins, heal us by your Spirit, and raise us to new life in Christ. Amen.

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

## Sermon including readings from Tobit

One sadness with our Protestant bible is that certain Books were omitted. The book of Tobit is one of these. It was omitted because at the time of compilation only Greek texts existed. Subsequently, both Aramaic and Hebrew copies have been found. So it comes with the same authority as all the rest of our bible.

Tobit, tells the history of Tobit and his son, Tobias.

Tobit was brought up in northern Israel, of the tribe of Naphthali. He was faithful Jew often making regular the pilgrimage on his own with the 'first yield of fruit and beasts, the tithe (tenth) of cattle and the sheep's first shearings'. (Tobit 1. vv6-7)

With the rest of his tribe he was then exiled, with the rest of his tribe to Nineveh. He became the King's purveyor, transacting business on his behalf travelling to Media, where he also deposited 10 talents of silver. As one talent of silver = 44 kg – that is nearly half a ton of silver worth about £275000 at today's prices! He was obviously quite a rich man.

One Pentecost after a rather busy day he lay down outside to sleep because he was so hot. His face was uncovered. Droppings from some sparrows fell on his eyes and he found he could not see for white spots, before his eyes. Doctors' medications only made the problem worse till he was blinded and remained so for four years. (Chapter 2vv 10-11.)

He then prays a lament to God where he cries 'Better death than life for me.... Lord, be pleased to deliver me from this sorrow'. (Chapter 3 v6)

Meanwhile in Media, a distant relative of Tobit, Sarah, is in in much the same state of mind and prays a similar prayer. She has been married seven times, but each time Asmodeus, the worst of demons has killed her bridegroom before they came together on her wedding nights. (Chapter 3 vv7-12).

Tobit remembers his silver and realises he must get his son Tobias to collect it before he dies. He urges him to go and take a travelling companion. He finds Raphael an angel of the Lord, but does not recognise him as such. Raphael introduces himself as Azariah. (Chapter 4)

They set off and spend the first night by the river Tigris. Suddenly a fish jumps out and grabs his foot. 'Do not let it go' shouts Raphael. Tobias catches the fish. Raphael tells him to gut it but keep the liver, gall and heart (because of their healing properties) and they have fish for supper. (Chapter 4)

When they had entered Media Raphael says to Tobias

Chapter 7 vv 1-16

"Tonight we must stay in the house of Raguel, who is a relative of yours. He has a beautiful daughter named Sarah,

12but no other son or daughter apart from Sarah. Since you are Sarah's closest relative, you more than any other have the right to marry her. Moreover, her father's estate is rightfully yours to inherit. The girl is wise, courageous, and very beautiful; and her father is a good man who loves her dearly."

13He continued: "You have the right to marry her. So listen to me, brother. Tonight I will speak to her father about the girl so that we may take her as your bride. When we return from Rages, we will have the wedding feast for her. I know that Raguel cannot keep her from you or promise her to another man; he would incur the death penalty as decreed in the Book of Moses. For he knows that you, more than anyone else, have the right to marry his daughter. Now listen to me, brother; we will speak about this girl tonight, so that we may arrange her engagement to you. Then when we return from Rages, we will take her and bring her back with us to your house."

14But Tobiah said to Raphael in reply, "Brother Azariah, I have heard that she has already been given in marriage to seven husbands, and that they have died in the bridal chamber. On the very night they approached her, they would die. I have also heard it said that it was a demon that killed them.

15So now I too am afraid of this demon, because it is in love with her and does not harm her; but it kills any man who wishes to come close to her. I am my father's only child. If I should die, I would bring the life of my father and mother down to their grave in sorrow over me; they have no other son to bury them!"

16Raphael said to him: "Do you not remember your father's commands? He ordered you to marry a woman from your own ancestral family. Now listen to me, brother; do not worry about that demon. Take Sarah. I know that tonight she will be given to you as your wife!

17When you go into the bridal chamber, take some of the fish's liver and the heart, and place them on the embers intended for incense, and an odour will be given off.

18As soon as the demon smells the odour, it will flee and never again show itself near her. Then when you are about to have intercourse with her, both of you must first get up to pray.\* Beg the Lord of heaven that mercy and protection be granted you. Do not be afraid, for she was set apart for you before the world existed. You will save her, and she will go with you. And I assume that you will have children by her, and they will be like brothers for you. So do not worry."

And everything goes to plan.

He marries and survives the wedding night and they collect the silver.

They return to Ninevah;

Raphael said to Tobias before he came near to his father: "I know that his eyes will be opened.

8Apply the fish gall to his eyes, and the medicine will make the white scales shrink and peel off from his eyes; then your father will have sight again and will see the light of day."

He does this and then they have a great party to celebrate his wedding.

Then Tobit and Tobias decide to give Raphael half the silver for his help.

At this Raphael comes clean, telling him his name:

(Chapter 12)

15I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand and serve before the Glory of the Lord."<sup>e</sup>

16Greatly shaken, the two of them fell prostrate in fear.

17But Raphael said to them: "Do not fear; peace be with you! Bless God now and forever.

18As for me, when I was with you, I was not acting out of any favour on my part, but by God's will. So bless God every day; give praise with song.

19Even though you saw me eat and drink, I did not eat or drink anything; what you were seeing was a vision.

20So now bless the Lord on earth and give thanks to God. Look, I am ascending to the one who sent me. Write down all that has happened to you."<sup>f</sup> And he ascended.

So there it is the book of the Bible which gives the most detailed revelation of one of God's angels.

I am sure we all know of people who have seen or experienced the work of angels.

It does not really matter how God works, be it through us, or others, or angels, or the virgin, Mary. All that matters is that He does. So we thank him and praise him for all his mighty works.

We rejoice that our all-powerful all-loving God answers all our prayers, as he answered the prayers of Tobit and Sarah. It may take time, sometimes even years. The answers may not be as we expect but they will always be in god' total love for us and in our best eternal interests.

### **StF 83**

1 Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;  
to his feet your tribute bring.  
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,  
evermore his praises sing.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise the everlasting King!

2 Praise him for his grace and favor  
to his people in distress.  
Praise him, still the same as ever,  
slow to chide, and swift to bless.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Glorious in his faithfulness!

3 Fatherlike he tends and spares us;  
well our feeble frame he knows.  
In his hand he gently bears us,  
rescues us from all our foes.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Widely yet his mercy flows!

4 Angels, help us to adore him;  
you behold him face to face.  
Sun and moon, bow down before him,  
dwellers all in time and space.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise with us the God of grace!

Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847)

## **Prayers of intercession**

Christ, through whom all things are made, **sustain all creation.**

Christ, exalted in the lowest and the least, **give us humility.**

*Silent prayer for those we know personally, who are in special need*

Christ present in the poor and the oppressed, **fill us with compassion.**

Christ, forsaken in the hungry and the homeless, **minister to them through our hands.**

Christ, present where two or three are gathered, **be known among us.**

Christ present in word, sacrament and sign, **grant us your peace.**

**Our father.....**

### **HP641**

**God, that madest earth and heaven,  
darkness and light;  
who the day for toil hast given,  
for rest the night;  
may thine angel guards defend us,  
slumber sweet thy mercy send us;  
holy dreams and hopes attend us,  
all through the night.**

**Guard us waking, guard us sleeping,  
and when we die,  
may we in thy mighty keeping  
all peaceful lie;  
when the last dread call shall wake us,  
do not thou, our God, forsake us,  
but to reign in glory take us  
with Thee on high.**

Martin Leckebusch(1962-) © 1999 Kevin Mayhew Ltd

## **Benediction**

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.