

Christchurch – 24th January 2021 at 10:45am

CTiH PULPIT EXCHANGE

Preacher: Titus Ekun

Worship Leader: Tony Edmonds

Reader: Annette England

Music: Mike Crowley

Technician: John Hamblin



WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Good morning everyone. Welcome to Christchurch's Online Worship for 24th January 2021. Whether you are joining in real time or on "catch-up" later in the week by YouTube, podcast, DVD or CD, may the Lord bless this time in His presence. If you are watching live then you are very welcome to join us for Virtual Coffee at 11:30am on Zoom. The details are in the Christchurch Weekly notices.

My name is Tony Edmonds, one of the church's Worship Leaders, and I'm also one of two Area Leads with responsibility for Worship at Christchurch.

Today's music has been performed and recorded by Mike Crowley earlier in the week and behind the scenes John Hamblin

is mixing all the sound & visuals and keeping us online. Joining me live this morning are Annette England and our guest preacher, Titus Ekun, from the Redeemed Christian Church of God Heritage Haven in Hitchin.

It is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and, as is the tradition, it is also the Churches Together in Hitchin "Pulpit Exchange", where ministers and preachers from all the local churches get mixed up so they (and the congregations) get to experience something a little different. This year we're actually doing a straight swap with Heritage Haven, as one of our Local Preachers, Andy Searle, is leading their worship online this morning.

We will find out a bit more about the church in a while, and we look forward to Titus preaching on today's theme: "Safe in the arms of Jesus".

POEM: "COMING WITH AWE"

Let us think of what God has done, and continues to do. He is always at work around us.

"Come and see what God has done, how awesome his works on our behalf!" – *Psalm 66:5*

God of life, I come in worship,
lost in wonder, filled with awe.
At your feet I kneel in homage,
here to marvel and adore.
Words cannot express your greatness,
awesome is your majesty:
higher than the highest mountain,
deeper than the deepest sea.

God of love, I come rejoicing,
here to celebrate your grace.
Consecrate this sacred moment,
help me meet you face to face.
In the love of Christ enfold me,
by his touch make me anew:
cleanse, renew, restore, refashion
all I am and all I do.

God of light, I come in gladness,
soul on fire and heart ablaze,
reaching out in adoration,
singing hymns and songs of praise.
Take the hope that flames within me,
take the joy that burns so bright;
may my life reflect your glory,
finding favour in your sight.

["Poems to help you Pray", Nick Fawcett]

SONG: "OUR GOD"

Water You turned into wine
Opened the eyes of the blind
There's no one like you
None like you

Into the darkness You shine
Out of the ashes we rise
There's no one like you
None like you

Our God is greater, our God is stronger
God You are higher than any other
Our God is Healer, awesome in power
Our God, Our God

Into the darkness You shine
Out of the ashes we rise
There's no one like you
None like you

Our God is greater, our God is stronger
God You are higher than any other
Our God is Healer, awesome in power
Our God, Our God

Our God is greater, our God is stronger
God You are higher than any other
Our God is Healer, awesome in power
Our God, Our God

And if Our God is for us, then who could ever stop us?
And if our God is with us, then what could stand against?
And if Our God is for us, then who could ever stop us?
And if our God is with us, then what could stand against?
Then what can stand against?

Our God is greater, our God is stronger
God You are higher than any other
Our God is Healer, awesome in power
Our God, Our God

Our God is greater, our God is stronger
God You are higher than any other
Our God is Healer, awesome in power
Our God, Our God

And if Our God is for us, then who could ever stop us?
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Then what can stand against?

*Chris Tomlin, Jesse Reeves, Jonas Myrin, Matt Redman © 2010 Universal Music
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PRAYERS OF PRAISE AND CONFESSION

God wants to have a continuing love relationship with us that is real and personal, and he invites us to become involved with Him in his work.

Let us pray ...

Almighty and most wonderful God, greater than we can ever imagine, higher than our highest thoughts, enthroned in glory and splendour, we come to give you our worship. We come to offer our praise and to make our confession.

We recognise that your ways are not our ways and your thoughts are not our thoughts. Lord, have mercy on us.

Forgive us our misplaced pride and arrogance – we have been full of our own importance, preferring our ways to yours. We trust in our own wisdom instead of your guidance, setting ourselves up in your place.

But your ways are not our ways, and your thoughts are not our thoughts. Lord have mercy on us.

Forgive us our narrow vision and closed minds – we have tied you down to our own understanding, closing our hearts to anything which challenges our restricted horizons. We have lost sight of your greatness and failed to listen to your voice - or the voice of others.

But your ways are not our ways, and your thoughts are not our thoughts. Lord have mercy on us.

Almighty and most wonderful God, remind us that you have always more to say, more to reveal, and more to do. Open our eyes, our minds and our hearts to who and what you are.

Remind us that your ways are not our ways, and your thoughts are not our thoughts. Lord, have mercy on us.

And so fill us with awe and wonder, joy and thanksgiving, praise and worship, now and for evermore. AMEN

INTERVIEW WITH TITUS EKUN

As promised earlier, we are going to find out a bit more about Titus and the Heritage Haven church before he preaches shortly.

Welcome to Christchurch Worship Online. It's not quite the same as welcoming you into our normal worship space in the centre of town and I know it's a bit strange not being able to see

everyone who is worshipping with us, but we're very glad you're able to share with us today - and believe me, there are about 150 people out there joining us "live", with just as many watching on "catch-up" during the week.

So, let me start with a question about your church. I have not heard of the "Redeemed Christian Church of God Heritage Haven" before, so could you tell us a bit about it? Where do you meet? Is it new, or just new to Hitchin? Does the church have a "passion" for anything in particular?

<Answer>

And tell us a little of your own background, if you wouldn't mind. How did you get to lead this church and come to Hitchin? Did you bring a family with you or did you find one here?

<Answer>

One thing that the annual Pulpit Exchange does is mix up different styles of worship and "doing church". I realise you've not really seen the normal "Christchurch experience", but what might our congregation recognise as familiar or different about Heritage Haven and worship there?

<Answer>

Finally, is there anything that we, here at Christchurch, can pray for, or with, you at Heritage Haven?

<Answer>

Thank you very much indeed for sharing with us, Titus. Just before we hear today's lesson and listen to your words I'd like to pray.

Heavenly Father, we pray for our brother, Titus, and his church. We pray for their witness for you in this town.

<Specific prayer points>

We praise you for the common bond you have given us all in Christ. We come together in fellowship with you and one another as part of the great company of your people in every place and time. May we all be encouraged and may your family in this town grow and flourish to the glory of your name. In one faith we gather – may we be bound together in love. AMEN

READING – EXODUS 8:20-24

The Plague of Flies

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Get up early in the morning and confront Pharaoh as he goes to the river and say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may

worship me. If you do not let my people go, I will send swarms of flies on you and your officials, on your people and into your houses. The houses of the Egyptians will be full of flies; even the ground will be covered with them.

“But on that day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live; no swarms of flies will be there, so that you will know that I, the LORD, am in this land. I will make a distinction between my people and your people. This sign will occur tomorrow.”

And the LORD did this. Dense swarms of flies poured into Pharaoh's palace and into the houses of his officials; throughout Egypt the land was ruined by the flies.

SERMON – “SAFE IN THE ARMS OF JESUS”

<Titus Ekun>

SONG – “YOU NEVER LET GO” (StF 626)

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
Your perfect love is casting out fear
And even when I'm caught in the middle of the storms of this life
I won't turn back, I know You are near

And I will fear no evil
For my God is with me
And if my God is with me
Whom then shall I fear?
Whom then shall I fear?

Oh no, You never let go
Through the calm and through the storm
Oh no, You never let go
In every high and every low
Oh no, You never let go
Lord, You never let go of me

And I can see a light that is coming for the heart that holds on
A glorious light beyond all compare
And there will be an end to these troubles
But until that day comes
We'll live to know You here on the earth

And I will fear no evil
For my God is with me
And if my God is with me
Whom then shall I fear?
Whom then shall I fear?

Oh no, You never let go
Through the calm and through the storm
Oh no, You never let go
In every high and every low
Oh no, You never let go
Lord, You never let go of me

Yes, I can see a light that is coming for the heart that holds on
And there will be an end to these troubles
But until that day comes
Still I will praise You, still I will praise You

Yes, I can see a light that is coming for the heart that holds on
And there will be an end to these troubles
But until that day comes
Still I will praise You, still I will praise You

Oh no, You never let go
Through the calm and through the storm
Oh no, You never let go
In every high and every low
Oh no, You never let go
Lord, You never let go of me

Oh, You never let go, You never let go

Oh no, You never let go
Through the calm and through the storm
Oh no, You never let go
In every high and every low
Oh no, You never let go
Lord, You never let go of me

You never let, You never let go
You never let go of me

Matt Redman and Beth Redman © 2005, Thankyou Music - CCL 7011

PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE AND LORD'S PRAYER

As we come to our prayers for the world, our nation, our town and ourselves, I'd like to remind you that the Christchurch Family Prayer Book of names continues to be prayed each week. Even though we don't read out the names online, Mandy Pye diligently prays for the 8 or so people from our church family on each weekly page in the book. We thank you Mandy.

So we turn to our prayers for others. Please bring to God those people that have been laid on your hearts as well as those that I mention. Let us pray ...

God of the past and of the future, we bring to you in prayer those people and places on our hearts today:

We remember the parts of the world where people are being killed, oppressed and displaced. We pray especially for the people of Tigray in Ethiopia, for the people of Dafur in the Sudan, for the Uighur peoples in China. May those in power leave behind violence and follow your call to peace.

Lord Jesus, you called fisherman as they worked, so we pray for fisherman today as they struggle to make a living. We pray for all those who work to bring food to our table as they struggle with the complexities of legislation and the challenges of extreme weather. And may those who exploit or abuse leave behind cruelty and follow your call to compassion.

We pray for all young people caught up in and trapped by gang violence,
for those who have been stabbed or shot and for their families,
for those who live in fear of being attacked,
for those who have been imprisoned, who have committed murder – and for their families,
for all those who carry weapons.
Help them to leave behind despair and to follow your call to hope.

We pray for the people of America as Joe Biden begins his term as President, and for Kamala Harris and all those entrusted with

the responsibility of re-shaping and re-uniting the states that make up that vast nation, so divided by race and politics and so ravaged by Covid. Help them to leave behind ambition and to follow your call to serve.

We pray for one another, for our church families, our communities, and our loved ones, for those who feel overwhelmed by the challenges of each day, for those adapting to new ways of living, for those who are ill, for those close to death, for those who are grieving.

Help us all to leave behind all that separates us from you and from one another and to follow your call to trust and to love –in Jesus' name. AMEN

Let's all now say the Lord's Prayer out loud wherever you are. Use whichever version you are familiar with. Although we are apart, we join together in praying the prayer that Jesus gave 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.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

A closing prayer.

Awesome God, we remember all you have done; rejoice in all you are doing and receive all you are yet to do.

We go into this week knowing you will be with us – to hold, to heal, to guide and to protect. Safe in the arms of Jesus, we serve you in the name of Christ. AMEN.

HYMN – “SOLDIERS OF CHRIST, ARISE” (StF 637)

Soldiers of Christ, arise,
And put your armour on,
Strong in the strength which God supplies,
Through His eternal Son;

Strong in the Lord of Hosts,
And in His mighty power,
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
Is more than conqueror.

Stand then in His great might,
With all His strength endued;
And take, to arm you for the fight,
The panoply of God,
That, having all things done,
And all your conflicts past,
Ye may o'ercome through Christ alone,
And stand complete at last.

Leave no unguarded place,
No weakness of the soul,
Take every virtue, every grace,
And fortify the whole.
To keep your armour bright
Attend with constant care,
Still walking in your Captain's sight
And watching unto prayer.

From strength to strength go on;
Wrestle, and fight, and pray;

Tread all the powers of darkness down,
And win the well-fought day:
Still let the Spirit cry
In all His soldiers, "Come!"
Till Christ the Lord descend from high,
And take the conquerors home.

Charles Wesley – CCL 7011