

**Sunday Service, The Swiss Church in London  
20 September 2020, Reverend Carla Maurer**

**WELCOME**

In the name of God – Parent, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

This is a very special day for all of us! We have been waiting a long time for this moment to be reunited in our beautiful church, with our dear friends and brothers and sisters in Christ. We have been waiting a long time to return to our Temple.

This made me think a lot about the Hebrews and their endurance of the Babylonian Exile. They were waiting not just for months, but for generations, in the hope that one day they will be able to return to their Temple in Jerusalem, their spiritual home. Many of the Biblical prophets refer to this time of waiting and suffering, and one of them was Prophet Habakkuk (3:17-19). His words resonate a lot with our situation today.

Though the fig tree does not blossom,  
and no fruit is on the vines;  
though the produce of the olive fails,  
and the fields yield no food;  
though the flock is cut off from the fold,  
and there is no herd in the stalls,  
yet I will rejoice in the Lord;  
I will exult in the God of my salvation.  
God, the Lord, is my strength;  
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,  
and makes me tread upon the heights.

En effet, le figuier ne fleurira pas,  
la vigne ne produira rien,  
le fruit de l'olivier manquera,  
les champs ne donneront pas de nourriture;  
les brebis disparaîtront du pâturage,  
et il n'y aura plus de bœufs dans les étables.  
Mais moi, je veux me réjouir en l'Eternel,  
je veux être dans l'allégresse à cause du Dieu de mon salut.  
L'Eternel, le Seigneur, est ma force:  
il rend mes pieds semblables à ceux des biches  
et il me fait marcher sur mes hauteurs.

Denn der Feigenbaum wird nicht ausschlagen  
und der Weinstock keinen Ertrag geben;  
die Frucht des Ölbaums wird trügen,  
und die Felder werden keine Nahrung liefern;  
die Schafe werden aus den Hürden getilgt,  
und kein Rind wird mehr in den Ställen sein.  
Ich aber will mich freuen in dem Herrn  
und frohlocken über den Gott meines Heils!

Gott, der Herr, ist meine Kraft;  
er macht meine Füße denen der Hirsche gleich  
und stellt mich auf meine Höhen!

I have made certain adjustments to the format of the service, for the simple reason that with the distanced seating it will be even more difficult to hear my spoken words. Therefore, no sermon today, but loads of music, prayers, time for reflection... and a Bible quiz! All the words are printed in your booklet. We will also have a musical surprise guest at the end of the service.

And now, I have another little surprise for you. The Easter candle 2020 has been waiting patiently for us to be lit...

## **LIGHTING OF THE EASTER CANDLE**

### **ORGAN MUSIC**

### **PRAYER**

Creator God, we thank you that we can open our heart to you.

We thank you that we can pour out our innermost soul and share our deepest thoughts knowing that you listen and understand. We can bring before you our sorrow as well as our joy, feelings of anger as well as peace, hatred as well as love, confusion as well as certainty.

We bring them honestly to you, so we may discover your restoring love – a love that frees us to be the person you would have us to be.

Hear now our prayer! Amen

## **HYMN MEDITATIONS**

### **Grosser Gott words:**

1. Holy Father, Holy Son,  
Holy Spirit, Three we name you;  
while in essence only One,  
undivided God we claim you,  
and adoring bend the knee,  
while we sing this mystery.

2. Puisse ton règne de paix  
s'étendre sur tout le monde!  
Dès maintenant, à jamais,  
que sur la terre et sur l'onde,  
tous genoux soient abattus  
au nom du Seigneur Jésus.

3. Herr, erbarm, erbarme dich.  
Laß uns deine Güte schauen;  
Deine Treue zeige sich,  
wie wir fest auf dich vertrauen.  
Auf dich hoffen wir allein;  
laß uns nicht verloren sein.

### Reflections by Reverend Carla Maurer

The words in this hymn are Christian theology in a nutshell. They represent all that Christianity stands for.

Probably the most distinctive trait in Christianity is the faith in the triune God. God is not just one, but three: Parent, Son and Holy Spirit. God is the creating force behind the universe, caring and loving (God Parent), the manifestation of God as a human being, experiencing life as we do (God Son), and the creative force within us who lifts us up and unites us (God Holy Spirit).

Three, and yet in essence they are only one. That's confusing! But then, isn't life confusing? Can we ever really grasp the meaning of life?

Sometimes it's good to cease trying to search for explanations and instead bend our knee to adore the confusion and complexity that surrounds us. Surrender in awe and sing this mystery!

Our humble adoration of life as it is will lead the way to God's kingdom of peace. It is our destiny to live in peace, in tune with God's creation. Let us fall on our knees and worship God's creation in all humbleness. Let us fall on our knees before every person, before every living being, in awe of God's creation, until our knees hurt. Who are we to judge!

God is goodness. God looks gently on us. God is love, from the beginning of the universe and to the end of all time. We can trust that God is good. Our hope is founded in God, the source of goodness and love.

We are not lost.

This is Christian theology in a nutshell.

### **BIBLE QUIZ (see separate sheet)**

#### **Lobe den Herren words:**

1. Lobe den Herren,  
der deinen Stand sichtbar gesegnet,  
der aus dem Himmel  
mit Strömen der Liebe geregnet.  
Denke daran,  
was der Allmächtige kann,  
der dir mit Liebe begegnet.

2. Bénissons Dieu, notre Roi,  
Dont la main étendue,  
Porte Ses faibles enfants,  
Comme l'aigle en la nue!  
Il nous guérit.  
Son pouvoir est infini,  
Il nous remplit d'allégresse.

3. Praise to the Lord,  
O let all that is in me adore Him!  
All that hath life and breath,  
come now with praises before Him!  
Let the amen sound from His people again;  
Gladly forever adore Him

### Reflections by Reverend Carla Maurer

This second hymn is peppered with images and symbols to bring to life the perhaps drier language that is often used in theology. Images help us to understand the true meaning of your word.

You are invited to meditate on the following hymn lyrics:

*Streams of love fall down like rain from the heavens.*

*God stretches out her hands and carries her children, like an eagle on her wings.*

*Let the amen sound from his people again.*

What images do they trigger in you? Which of the three images speaks most to you?

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Today I want to pray for only one thing because I don't know what else to do in my powerlessness. I want to pray for the Soul of Europe.

Forgiving, caring God. Europe has lost its soul. We have lost our soul.

People live in overcrowded, inhuman conditions in refugee camps at the border of our continent. We know what is going on, yet we decide to keep them at an arm's length and leave them to suffer out of convenience and fear. We have failed every single one of them. They came here because of our values and because they thought that in Europe we respect and protect human life. We have betrayed our values. We have betrayed you.

God, forgive us.

After the devastating fire in the Greek refugee camp of Moria, police have thrown tear gas at families and small children fleeing the fire to seek shelter in a nearby village. They have thrown tear gas at children! These are people who have suffered war, rape, imprisonment, trauma, and we send them to hell once more because we can't get ourselves to help them.

Gracious God, we have lost our soul - save our soul!

God, I feel so powerless. I sob when I see the images coming in from the Lampedusa, Tripolis and Moria, the images of the people left to die on a boat floating on the Mediterranean Sea. God, save Europe's soul. Save our souls. Let us not be ignorant. Open our eyes to the suffering of others. Light in us your holy anger. Touch our hearts. Teach us to never accept this as the new normal.

Lord, I want to pray for only one thing today. I want to pray for Europe and its people. Save our soul. Save our values. Deliver your people from evil. Lead us back onto your path.

*Keep a moment of silence for people who need our prayers in this very moment.*

Amen

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

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.

### **ORGAN MUSIC**

### **BLESSING**

May the living God be by your side, no matter how helpless or hopeless you feel. May the Lord look upon you gently, soften your heart and make you whole.

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Que le Seigneur te bénisse et te garde! Que le Seigneur fasse briller sur toi son visage, qu'il se penche vers toi! Que le Seigneur tourne vers toi son visage, qu'il t'apporte la paix!

Gott segne dich und behüte dich; Gott lasse sein Angesicht leuchten über dir und sei dir gnädig; Gott hebe sein Angesicht über dich und gebe dir Frieden.

### **MUSICAL SURPRISE GUEST**