

Worshipping God Together : Apart
Church; Physically Distanced but Spiritually United
Worship Prepared by Rev. Janine Atkinson

Opening Words

God calls us to worship in spirit and in truth.

So here I am Lord, truly a mixture of both deep sadness
and indescribable hope.

Here I am to worship you.

You are the one who understands the conflicts of my heart
and meets with me and my spirit
and truly beyond my expectations.

Hymn - Be still, for the presence of the Lord

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here;
come bow before Him now, with reverence and fear:
in Him no sin is found - we stand on holy ground
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One is here

Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around;
He burns with holy fire, with splendour He is crowned:
how awesome is the sight - our radiant King of light
Be still, for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord, is moving in this place:
He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister His grace -

no work too hard for Him. In faith receive from Him.
Be still, for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place.

David J Evans ©1986 Thankyou Music

Approaching God in Prayer

Together, yet apart
unite us in worship, Lord God
so that we may be one in you
and you may be glorified.

Lord God, you invite us to come and share in your story.

So, like the disciples, gathered around Jesus,
trying so hard to understand,
and to cope with difficult news and difficult days
here I am before you now asking you to bless me with understanding
as I pause with you, trying to grasp some more of your story –
your tough and challenging, but amazing story!

Sometimes I feel so much like those disciples
I want to protect Jesus, from harm.

And for myself, I want a path that is easy and smooth.

But the way of life to which you call us is a challenge.

And yet, Lord God, you do not ask us to do anything without also giving us the resources to cope.

You do not ask us to go anywhere you haven't already been. But you do call us to take up our cross.

So we come to you with fear and trembling, yet knowing that ultimately your way is the best way of living not only for us but for the life and flourishing of the world

So Lord, help us.

We confess that we want to follow you, but get easily put off by the twists and turns of the journey.

There are times when we are willing to carry the cross, but there are also many times when we want to lay it down and let someone else pick it up.

We are willing to speak your word, but sometimes we do so quietly, so that it will not disturb anyone.

Sometimes we just want to put your cross on the wall, so that it's out of harm's way.

Forgive us for our lack of trust in ourselves, in each other, and in you.

Help us to learn how to reach out when we are struggling and to open our hearts and minds enough to let you empower us, because, however much we stumble, we want to walk with you.

So, gracious Lord, receive us... receive me as I come with expectations, and with fears; with joys, and with sorrows; with faith, and with doubt. Receive me, challenge me; and grant me your peace.

Join my heart in prayer with the hearts and voices of countless thousands of other people who follow your way as I pray:-

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

To be the best!



Sir Mo Farah – Base Training - A Typical Week

Below is the typical weekly training schedule for Mo Farah (2011-2014 while training for the 5000m/10,000m races).

It was this training program that Farah used to win double Olympic Gold in the 5000m and 10000m at both the London 2012 Olympic Games and the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. The programme involves running up to a maximum of 135 miles (217km) per week with no rest days and two sessions every day but Sunday, when he typically does 22-25 miles (35-40km) at around 5:40 min/mile (around 3:30/km).

Monday

am: 10-mile recovery run (6:00min/mile pace)

pm: 6-mile recovery run

Tuesday

am: 4-mile warm-up run; 8-12mile tempo run anywhere from 4:40 to 5:00min/mile pace (depending on altitude and terrain); 3-mile cool-down run

Noon: Strength and conditioning session (1 hour)

pm: 6-mile recovery run

Wednesday

am: 12-mile recovery run, followed by a massage.

pm: 5-mile recovery run

Thursday

am: 11-mile recovery run

pm: 5-mile recovery run

Friday

am: 4-mile warm-up jog; 10x200m intervals (with 200m recovery jogs) on grass in 29 seconds each rep; 10x200m hill sprints at equal effort, walk back down to recover; 4-mile cool-down run.

Noon: Strength and conditioning session (1 hour)

pm: 4-miles easy

Saturday

am: 11-mile recovery run, massage

pm: 6-mile recovery run

Sunday

am: 22-25 miles, no slower than marathon race pace + 1 minute (for Mo, this means 5:40min/mile)

Total Stats:

- 126-135 miles per week
- 15 training sessions in total
- 2 gym
- 2 massage

From <https://www.sweatelite.co/mo-farah-base-training-typical-week/> 25/08/20

Wow! That's a lot of effort.

I wonder what Mo Farrah and other elite athletes have to forgo and suffer in order to achieve what they want to achieve - to be the best they possibly can be at what they do?

What do you think Mo, and others like him, have had to deny themselves or give up? *Write down your ideas here if you like....*

Listen for God's word to you about how it will be necessary to make sacrifices in order to follow Jesus' way.

[Matthew 16: 21 - 28](#) Jesus predicts his death

²¹ *From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.*

²² *Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 'Never, Lord!' he said. 'This shall never happen to you!'*

²³ *Jesus turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.'*

²⁴ *Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.'*

²⁸ *'Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.'*

[Keep a silence for reflection.....](#)

What might I need to deny myself or give up in order to truly follow Jesus?

Hymn - I want to walk with Jesus Christ

I want to walk with Jesus Christ
all the days I live of this life on earth,
to give to him complete control
of body and of soul:

*Follow him, follow him, yield, your life to him,
he has conquered death, he is King of kings.
Accept the joy which he gives to those
who yield their lives to him.*

I want to learn to speak to him,
to pray to him, confess my sin,
to open my life and let him in,
for joy will then be mine:

Follow him, follow him....

I want to learn to read his word,
for this is how I know the way,
to live my life as pleases him,
in holiness and joy:

Follow him, follow him....

I want to learn to speak of him;
my life must show that he lives in me,
my deeds, my thoughts, my words must speak
of all his love for me:

Follow him, follow him....

O holy Spirit of the Lord,
enter now into this heart of mine,
take full control of my selfish will
and make me wholly thine:

Follow him, follow him....

C Simmonds, 1964 Copyright © C. Simmonds*

Reflection

I wear a cross pretty much all the time. People like my cross and it's a good conversation starter whenever people comment on it.

I tell them that it's like my faith journey, it has twists and turns in it; times when I've 'wandered off' the path. But yet if you take the base of the cross as my starting point, it always returns to the central point and heads onwards and upwards - in the right direction! And often then people tell me about the twists and turns in their own relationship with God.



For many people the cross is little more than a piece of jewellery, or a symbol at the front of a church, or something to ward off vampires!

But the cross has real meaning. It meant rejection and suffering for Jesus. And if we *follow* Jesus there is a real possibility of rejection and suffering for us, because Jesus' ways are still out of kilter with the world's ways and establishment ideals - the first being last and the last being first, and all that. And this way that is at cross purposes with 'worldly' ways is the way we are to follow. Jesus asks us for a basic decision to put following him, by word and action, ahead of our own desires and interests.

Now, Peter must have been pleased with himself, he was star pupil when he proclaimed that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. But for Peter the Messiah was the one who would save Israel from Roman rule and oppression. Peter's idea of the Messiah was a conquering hero who would lead his army (which of course would include Peter and the other 11) to drive the Romans out and take back the land for Israel. A new king David, a mighty one to slay the 'Goliath' - the giants - of the day.

Jesus says no!

Being the Messiah is about restoring the world to a relationship with God, getting relationships with God and with each other back into kilter with the way God intended when God created - and that isn't going to go down well with the people who have done very nicely, thank you, out of religious regulation, ritual and rhetoric. Jesus has ruffled feathers, and Jesus knows that this feather ruffling is going to continue apace and become more intense, intrusive and intentional.

Peter's confession of his realisation that Jesus is the Messiah was a 'divine' revelation, but Peter's natural reaction to all this 'cross talk' was all too human. What Jesus describes seems like a wretched end for God's Messiah. So, Peter becomes a stumbling block to Jesus, he's unable to appreciate the fullness of what Jesus is saying and risks tripping Jesus up.

And Jesus is effectively back in the wilderness being tempted to give up his ministry, avoid the rejection and suffering by taking an easier path. And it's Peter who is the tempter, the devil, the Satan. In a moment of weakness might Jesus succumb to the temptations to have the kingdoms of the earth?

But Jesus' way is the way of the cross, not the way of the world.

This first mention of the cross seems likely to relate, not specifically to the 'physical' one Jesus will eventually lift, but to his suffering. Jesus is using crucifixion and the cross as a metaphor for suffering and a cruel death, crucifixion being the most demeaning of all executions.

And the way of suffering is the one that anyone who wants to follow Jesus must take up. There is a real risk of suffering if we *truly* follow Jesus, his teaching and his example. We will be unpopular, we will ruffle feathers; to walk Jesus' way can, and for many people does, lead to real struggle and suffering.

But despite the suffering of truly following Jesus, whose message (and therefore our message) is *dangerous* in self-serving societies there is also the reward of hope, of finding the only *truly* rewarding life. It is not in clinging to the things that matter to us, the insights we have gained – even though they may have come from God – or the place we have carved out for ourselves in the world that our hope lies. All those things result in us forfeiting our lives. It is in losing everything that we find what we long for.

Jesus' cross and our cross is the cost of following the counter story to the one trumpeted by the world - the contrasting story of a world ordered according to God's calling and Jesus' leading.

Carrying the cross will mean different things for different people as we speak truth to power, enabled by God's Spirit. It depends on our circumstances, we all have our own context, talents and interests - skills that match God's Kingdom's job description.

The cross is inconvenient, it's not for decoration in church or to wear at your neck. It's the inconvenient truth that loving the world that God created is costly for those who live for themselves and fruitfulness for those who the world sees as 'less than'.

Jesus' was the King but his destiny was a bloody journey to the cross, through rejection, suffering and death to resurrection.

People captivated by Jesus' message of sacrifice, suffering and hope have changed the world for the better, they have given up the privileges of life to attain something much better.

The Christian road has a destination. It is not just a journey of suffering. Faithful following will be gloriously and lastingly worthwhile. Jesus will honour the commitment his disciples make to him.

Christian hope is God's love stretched out on a cross and present for eternity. We will 'find our life' in time and eternity.

'Carrying your cross means directing yourself to Jesus as your model for living... Self-denial means knowing Christ alone, instead of yourself, and watching him... rather than looking at the road'.

(Ulrich Luz)

Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me

This doesn't sound very comfortable.
It's not just a nice bit of religion on the side.

Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me

This doesn't make for easy living.
It's not about looking after number one.

Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me

This is not the careless option.
It's not just giving God the occasional thought.

Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me

This is not chill-out Christianity.
It's not about casual, lazy-living, hobby-status Jesus following.

Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me

This is passionate, come what may,
sacrificial, revolutionary obedience,
self-denying, cross-carrying,
follow Jesus whatever the cost.

Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me

Dear God, please show us
what that looks like in this
comfort-seeking, leisure-loving
self-serving culture.

So, show us what it means for us, today. **Amen.**

Hymn – Father, hear the prayer we offer

Father, hear the prayer we offer;
not for ease that prayer shall be,
but for strength that we may ever
live our lives courageously.

Not for ever in green pastures
do we ask our way to be;
but the steep and rugged pathway
may we tread rejoicingly.

Not for ever by still waters
would we idly rest and stay;
but would smite the living fountains
from the rocks along our way.

Be our strength in hours of weakness,
in our wanderings be our guide;
through endeavour, failure, danger,
Father, be thou at our side.

Love Maria Willis (1824-1908) and others

Holding the World in Prayer

Lord God,
you reproached Peter because he had only human concerns;
and we can empathise with Peter
because he just wanted to protect the one he loved.
So, we lift before you in prayer people the world over
who do whatever they must to protect the people they love.

You call us to follow your way even when the going is tough
and for some people following your way is dangerous.
So, we hold before you all who are persecuted for their faith,
those who take up their cross everyday
not knowing when their faith will end in suffering or sacrifice.
And we lift before you in prayer those who work tirelessly
to address the wrongs and injustices of the world.

We hold before you in prayer and love those who carry the cross of anger and abuse,
those who carry the cross of pain and suffering,
those who carry the cross of isolation and loneliness,
those who carry the cross of grief and mourning,

We hold before you people who do not understand the *meaning* of the cross for *their* lives,
even though they might *wear* it,
those who do not know how much difference knowing the depth and breadth of your love can make in
their lives

when they make room for you to work with them.

And we lift before you all those people we know who need to know the power of the cross expressed in your love and encouraging word.

Keep a silence for remembering.....

Living and loving God,
help us to find wise words to help and to heal
enable and encourage us and all your children,
as we seek to take up our cross and to follow you faithfully.

We ask all our prayers in Jesus' saving and redeeming name
Amen

Hymn - Will you come and follow me

Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown in you,
and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare,
should your life attract or scare,
will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true
when You but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.

Graham Maule & John L. Bell.
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Closing Words and Blessing

Cross-taker,
we want to be cross takers too.
Cross-chooser,
we want to choose the cross too,
and lose a life that is worth little
and gain a life that is worth much.
Make us cross-wise,
so that we may see your kingdom coming
and know your glory.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. Amen

*Now, make yourself a cup of tea, or coffee,
grab a biscuit, and phone someone you
would have talked to if you'd been at Church*

Images:-

Cross necklace - Janine's own.

Cup of Tea www.unsplash.com (free images)

