



## The Central Norfolk Methodist Circuit

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2025:** 23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

**Theme for today is "The Cost of Faith"**

**Prepared by Derek Grimshaw**

### Opening Words

Here I am, Lord God, and you are here with me.

Here we are, Holy Trinity, and you are gathered amongst us.

As you invite us into the miracle of the divine-relationship, three-in-one, so let us notice you at work in our lives, our community, our church, by your Spirit, we pray

**Amen.**

**Hymn STF 728 O God, you search me and you know me.** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XST5DCIHh6c>

### **O God, you search me, and you know me**

All my thoughts lie open to your gaze  
When I walk or lie down, you are before me  
'Ever the maker and keeper of my days

### **You know my resting and my rising**

You discern my purpose from afar  
And with love everlasting, you besiege me  
In ev'ry moment of life or death, you are

### **Before a word is on my tongue, Lord**

You have known its meaning through and through  
You are with me beyond my understanding  
God of my present, my past and future, too

### **Prayer**

Living, loving, Holy God, You know us better than we can ever know ourselves.

Today, as we come to you in prayer, we know you see all we have done all we want to do, the pain and regret we carry, the hopes we hold onto, the things we want to say, still finding shape in our hearts.

Help us to find a way to bring all of that, and still sense your presence amongst us, holding each and every one of us.

You welcome us with open arms, just as we are.

In your presence we can just be.

With you, there is no pretending, there are no brave faces, and no need to say, 'I'm fine' unless we mean it.

Thank you, O God, for your real love; real acceptance.

May we be ready to hear your word and accept your challenge this day, as we seek to share your life-changing and life-giving love with the world.

Thank you Lord.

Amen.

**Readings**      **Jeremiah 18: 1-11**      **Psalms 139: 1-6, 13-18**      **Philemon 1: 1-21**      **Luke 14: 25-33**

**Hymn STF 564 O thou who camest from above** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ6pmSEzJ5A>

O Thou who camest from above,  
the pure celestial fire to impart,  
kindle a flame of sacred love  
upon the altar of my heart.

There let it for Thy glory burn  
with inextinguishable blaze,  
and trembling to its source return,  
in humble prayer and fervent praise.



Jesus, confirm my heart's desire  
to work and speak and think for Thee,  
still let me guard the holy fire,  
and still stir up Thy gift in me.

Ready for all Thy perfect will,  
my acts of faith and love repeat,  
till death Thy endless mercies seal,  
and make my sacrifice complete.

## Reflection

Day after day we are bombarded on all sides by people making claims about how easy it is to achieve everything we have ever wanted. If we want to have extra cash, we simply flog our much-loved possessions, get another credit card, borrow at exorbitant rates (if you read the small print), buy now and pay later the offers come thick and fast. If we want to have a slender body, then we simply buy certain foods, take certain exercises or buy certain clothes. If we want to have brilliant white teeth then we buy the latest brand of toothpaste and if we are gullible enough, we can easily believe that there is an easy solution to all our problems. Over a lifetime I have come to believe that there is no substitute for hard work, grit determination and discipline.

I often think that the disciples must have thought that all their birthdays had come at once, these were ordinary working men who under normal circumstances would have never been considered to be academic enough to be disciples by a Rabbi, so that they might go on to become Rabbis themselves. Then this Jesus bloke comes along, and they are catapulted into the limelight. They don't appear to have earned that right, Jesus seems to have almost picked them at random, and they must have thought that they had found the easy fix. Jesus sets out what will be expected of the disciples if they want to with him. The journey for them will be costly and painful and Jesus does pack his punches when he talks about what lies ahead.

Poor old Jeremiah finds himself in a dreadful position. I am thankful that while there have been times in my journey of discipleship when life has been tough, God has never placed such demands on my ministry that Jeremiah faces, this is certainly not an easy fix. We are reminded that as St Paul writes this letter to Philemon appealing on behalf of Onesimus and we remember that while Paul was called personally by Jesus and has become the best known and most prolific evangelist for Christ. This was no quick fix, no easy ride, this was hard work.

This raises some important questions for the modern Church.

- What does your faith cost you?
- What is your relationship with God?
  - Is it about what he can do for you?
  - Do you feel that you have done your bit and now it is somebody else's turn?
- Are you ready to take up your cross every day and walk in his footsteps?

## Prayers of intercession

Living, loving God, we come to you in prayer again as part of our act of worship today.

As we pray, we ask that you would help us to follow in your way, so that each of us may choose light rather than darkness, may choose love and not hatred, may choose hope and not despair, that your Spirit might be at work within and through us, transforming the world around us, today and every day.

We pray for this church community, and the global church – help us to proclaim the gospel and to reveal your glory in the way we live.

Living, loving God, guide us this day, that we might be a part of your kingdom, a piece in your puzzle, a player in your story.

As we pray as part of our act of worship today, we pray for all people who are overwhelmed by the business and busy-ness of this world, for those who lack clear direction, and who are being led astray.

Today, as we read the news, open our newspapers, turn on the radios and televisions, we pray that the leaders in our world and in the media may be people of peace, people of wisdom, people of grace, choosing paths that lead towards wholeness, light and restoration.

Help us to find ways to hold our leaders and influencers to account, that they might hear the voice of those who seek justice and peace.

Living, loving God, guide us this day, that we might be a part of your kingdom, a piece in your puzzle, a player in your story.

Today, as we pray as part of our act of worship, we hold before you those whose lives are insecure, where relationships, homes or work are at risk; particularly recognizing the impact of the housing emergency on so many people in the UK at the moment.

We ask your comforting hand on those who feel desperate, who struggle to hold on to routine, rhythm or hope, on all whose health is failing, on those who feel their powers to be waning as they become more dependent on others.

Give each of us, and those around us, the courage to act with grace, clarity and humanity.

Living, loving God, guide us this day, that we might be a part of your kingdom, a piece in your puzzle, a player in your story.

We pray these, and all our prayers, through Jesus Christ our Lord,

**Amen.**

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

**Hymn: STF 440 Amazing Grace – how sweet the sound** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zG3wOkWyYAA>

Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)  
that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
and grace my fears relieved;  
how precious did that grace appear  
the hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares  
I have already come:  
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,  
his word my hope secures;  
he will my shield and portion be  
as long as life endures.

Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,  
and mortal life shall cease:  
I shall possess, within the veil,  
a life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,  
the sun forbear to shine;  
but God, who called me here below,  
will be forever mine.

### **Blessing**

And so we go forth, travelling in your name, O God, Powered by your grace, O Christ, Looking for your guidance, O Spirit.

Help me, help each of us, to follow in your way this week and in the weeks ahead, In Jesus' name we pray,

**Amen.**