

Service – God sometimes feels far away from me....

Intro: I think there are times in everyone's life when God seems far away and today we're going to look at that statement and how we can put it right!

79 - Dear Lord and Father of mankind

DEAR LORD AND FATHER OF MANKIND,

Forgive our foolish ways;
Reclothe us in our rightful mind;
In purer lives Thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise,
In deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard,
Beside the Syrian sea,
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word
Rise up and follow Thee,
Rise up and follow Thee.

O sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee
The silence of eternity,
Interpreted by love,
Interpreted by love.

With that deep hush subduing all
Our words and works that drown
The tender whisper of Thy call,
As noiseless let Thy blessing fall
As fell Thy manna down,
As fell Thy manna down.

Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace,
The beauty of Thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
O still small voice of calm,
O still small voice of calm!

PRAYER

Psalm 38 vv21 &22

LORD, do not forsake me;
do not be far from me, my God.
²² Come quickly to help me,
my Lord and my Savior.

1st Reading - Mathew 6:19-34 – Jesus said:

¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²² "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do

not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

²⁸ "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

261 – 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:

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
All of His love for me:

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:

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:

2nd Reading – Mathew 7:7-14 – Jesus said:

⁷ "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹ "Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ¹² So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. ¹³ "**Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.**

1030 – The Lord's my Shepherd

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.
And I will trust in You alone.

*And I will trust in You alone,
For Your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.*

He guides my ways in righteousness,

And He anoints my head with oil,
And my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.

And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.

The Message

I think there are times in everyone's life when God seems far away. On that first Good Friday which we remember each year, we read of Jesus' suffering, crucifixion and subsequent death. Just before Jesus died, He called out with a loud voice: "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" Jesus was quoting from Psalm 22 which was written hundreds of years before by David.

For Jesus, the reason why He was separated from God was that He had taken all sins on Himself, He loves us so much that He was taking the punishment for ALL our sins – those we have already committed and those which we still will commit. Everybody's sins from the beginning of time until the final judgement day, Jesus in taking all sin was separated from God by all those sins so that we can be righteous in God's sight, that's how much Jesus loves!! Some people may say, "What can we do to repay Jesus?" The answer is that we should BELIEVE THAT JESUS DIED FOR OUR SINS AND ON THE THIRD DAY HE AROSE FROM THE DEAD!

When we feel that God is far away from us, we need to retune our mind, just like when we were young and we had to get the clearest radio signal by tuning our radio into the strongest frequency.....

It is not that God is far away from us, because He is with us all the time. It is us who are out of tune with Him!

How do we get back to the strongest frequency? We have to read His Word in the Bible and PRAY for His Guidance.

Think of The Lord's my Shepherd and Jesus will lead us into His narrow way!

"The concept of the "Narrow Way" is a significant theme in Christian theology, emphasizing the difficulty and commitment required to live a life in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ. This idea is primarily derived from Jesus' teachings in the Gospel of Matthew, where He contrasts the narrow way with the broad way.

The primary scriptural reference for the Narrow Way is found in [Matthew 7:13-14](#) : "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life, and only a few find it." This passage is part of the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus outlines the principles of the Kingdom of Heaven and the righteousness expected of His followers.

The Narrow Way is often understood as the path of true discipleship, characterized by obedience, self-denial, and a commitment to the teachings of Christ. It is a path that requires discernment, perseverance,

and a willingness to go against the prevailing cultural norms that often lead to moral and spiritual compromise. In contrast, the Broad Way is depicted as the easier, more popular path that ultimately leads to destruction. This path is marked by a lack of moral restraint and an embrace of worldly values.

The challenge of the Narrow Way underscores the necessity of grace and divine assistance in the Christian life. While the path is difficult, believers are encouraged by the promise of God's presence and guidance. The Apostle Paul echoes this sentiment in [Philippians 2:12-13](#) : "Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence but now even more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you to will and to act on behalf of His good purpose."

Living according to the Narrow Way involves a daily commitment to spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, and fellowship with other believers. It requires a conscious effort to align one's life with the teachings of Scripture and to resist the temptations and pressures of the world. Jesus' call to "take up your cross and follow Me" ([Matthew 16:24](#)) encapsulates the sacrificial nature of this journey.

Throughout church history, the concept of the Narrow Way has been a source of inspiration and challenge for Christians. Early church fathers, reformers, and modern-day theologians have all emphasized the importance of living a life set apart for God. In various cultural contexts, the Narrow Way has been interpreted as a call to countercultural living, social justice, and personal holiness.

The Challenge of the Narrow Way remains a central tenet of Christian discipleship, calling believers to a life of faithfulness and devotion. It is a path that promises eternal life but requires a steadfast commitment to the teachings of Jesus Christ."

(source: https://biblehub.com/topical/t/the_challenge_of_the_narrow_way.htm)

I found this hymn on the internet:

1. Which way are you choosing, the narrow or broad?
You'll have to make up your mind..
Just give up your own way and follow the Lord;
Why don't you make up your mind?
He died, the stranger of Galilee,
to bring salvation to you and me;
A strong companion you'll prove Him to be,
So won't you make up your mind?
2. Which crowd will you follow, the large or the small?
Be sure to make up your mind.
The cost is demanding, but hear Jesus call;
Then come and make up your mind.
Your friends may shun you unthinkingly,
But Christ gives power and liberty;
To life with purpose you'll find the key,
When once you make up your mind!

3. On which are you resting, the Rock or the sand?
 You'd better make up your mind!
 With Christ as foundation your building will stand,
 But have you made up your mind?
 Temptations and trials must come your way,
 The storms of Judgement will rage one day;
 Take Jesus and on Him your confidence stay,
 Don't wait, but make up your mind!
4. O what will you do with the Saviour today?
 He bids you make up your mind.
 Repent and accept Him without delay,
 O sinner, make up your mind!
 Why stumble alone along the road?
 He'll sort your tangles, He'll take your load,
 And in your heart He will make his abode;
 It's time to make up your mind!

Richard Bewes (born 1934) © Richard Bewes/Jubilate Hymns

DO you remember when, as a child, you were bored? You had nothing to do, and it was probably your mother who told you to find something to do! There are 24 hours in a day, and 7 days in a week, that equals 168 hours in a week. It is up to us as to how we spend our time. Just think for a moment, **how much time do I spend seeking the Kingdom of God?** The answer is definitely not enough! So when you feel separated from God, the answer is to READ HIS WORD IN THE BIBLE AND PRAY! Amen.

278 I WILL SING THE WONDROUS STORY

Of the Christ who died for me;
 How He left His home in glory
 For the cross on Calvary.
 I was lost but Jesus found me,
 Found the sheep that went astray;
 Threw His loving arms around me,
 Drew me back into His way.

I was bruised but Jesus healed me,
 Faint was I from many a fall;
 Sight was gone, and fears possessed me,
 But He freed me from them all.
 Days of darkness still come o'er me;
 Sorrow's paths I often tread,
 But the Saviour still is with me,
 By His hand I'm safely led.

He will keep me till the river
 Rolls its waters at my feet,
 Then He'll bear me safely over,
 All my joys in Him complete.
 Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
 Of the Christ who died for me;
 Sing it with the saints in glory,
 Gathered by the crystal sea.

Let's say The Grace to each other:

May the Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of The Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever more, *Amen*.

This Service has been prepared by: Christopher Stirling of Steeple Bumpstead Congregational Church, Haverhill, UK.
If you have been sent this Service by a friend and would like to receive a Service every month, please email your request, titled "Please add me to your Emailing List" to: yewtreehouse@btinternet.com

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