

Call to Worship

Psalms 19 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

Prayer

Lord, your majesty and glory are on full display, night and day. It is so plain and clear that you are my all-powerful Creator God. Forgive me when I take my eyes off you. Your power over life and death are on full display in the resurrection of Jesus which has given me new life.

Your love is on full display when I experience your constant presence, your forgiveness and your answers to prayer.

I worship you my Lord and Father. In Jesus name. Amen

Song: “How Great Thou Art” by Stuart K Hine

1. Oh Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder,
Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, Thy power throughout the universe displayed.
*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee, how great Thou art, how great Thou art.
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee, how great Thou art, how great Thou art.*
2. And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,
That on that cross, my burden gladly bearing, he bled and died to take away my sin.
3. When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation,
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart.
Then I shall bow in humble adoration, and then proclaim, my God, how great Thou art.

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Prayer of Intercession

Lord, I pray for those who stand against injustice, those who are on the ground helping, loving, assisting and caring for those who desperately need it.

I pray for the Love Adelaide organisation that makes a stand for the unborn, their mothers and fathers affected by the plague of abortion.

I pray for our aboriginal people who have lost hope and are in a deadly downward spiral of drugs, alcohol and violence that has a devastating effect on each individual trapped in that

Soft Hearts, Hard Feet

cycle, especially the children. I pray for those who work closely with them, often remotely, particularly for those Christians who show God's love to those in need.

I pray for those who have fallen victim to sex addiction and the effect this has on sexuality and marriage. I pray particularly for those who minister God's truth in those situations, and those who make courageous political stands against such things as banning conversion therapy.

Father, all these things wound us as individuals, wound us as a nation and as a world. Help me to also be courageous as I make a stand for God's righteousness in my life.

All for the sake of Jesus I pray.

Amen

Song: "Make me a Channel of your Peace" (Francis of Assisi)

1. Make me a channel of your peace, where there is hatred let me bring your love,
Where there is injury, your pardon Lord, and where there is doubt true faith in you.
2. Make me a channel of your peace, where there's despair in life let me bring hope.
Where there is darkness only light, and where there's sadness ever joy.
3. O Master grant that I may never seek so much to be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love with all my soul.
4. Make me a channel of your peace, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
It is in giving to all men that we receive, and in dying that we are born to eternal life.

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Bible Readings:

- Matthew 28:18-20

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

- Matthew 22:34-40

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law." Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

Message: “Soft Hearts and Hard Feet”

Most of us will have heard the name of Jackie Pullinger and perhaps know at least some of her story. As a young English woman, she felt God was calling her to be a missionary, so she bought a one-way ticket on a ship travelling to Asia and waited until God told her where to get off. It ended up being Hong Kong where for many years she had an amazing ministry in the Walled City amongst drug addicts, prostitutes, child traffickers and violent Chinese gangs. She has gifted us with a couple of quotes which are challenging to us who aren't in such distant and dangerous places living out our lives as Christians.

One is, “Most of us have soft feet and hard hearts. What we need is soft hearts and hard feet.” When it comes to the poor and the disadvantaged and the needy we may have our hard hearts on show with, “It's all their own fault really”, “There is plenty of government funding for people in these situations”, “That's the choices they have made”, and our soft feet are on display when we are reluctant to go and mix with people such as these. So, the love of Jesus then can't be seen in our actions, nor in what we say.

Her other quote is, “I don't want people getting excited about what God is doing through me – I want them to get excited about what God is asking them to do.”

That's having a soft heart and hard feet.

Of course, the example and author of this is Jesus himself. Many of the highlights of his ministry on earth were for the disadvantaged and the outcasts, the wounded and the hurting in the Jewish society in which he lived. Zaccheus, although probably significantly financially advantaged, was reviled, and in the press of the crowd around him, Jesus plucked him from his sycamore tree, suffered considerable criticism for befriending him, but changed that hated man's life. Zaccheus' immediate response was restitution for his cheating and giving 50% of his wealth to the poor. Similarly, another tax collector, Matthew, throwing a much-criticised party for Jesus, gave up 100% of his livelihood and followed Jesus.

Soft heart and hard feet.

The heart of Jesus was evident when he risked disease when he healed lepers, risked censure by the authorities when he not only told a paralysed man, whose friends lowered him through the roof, to get off his bed and walk, but told him his sins were forgiven. He invited censure again when he healed a lame man on the Sabbath. And he again invited persecution from the Pharisees when he healed a blind man (the one who cheekily said to the Pharisees, “All I know is once I was blind and now I can see”) on the Sabbath.

Soft heart, hard feet.

Jesus also showed us his heart for foreigners and those with perhaps a different faith background. He from afar cast out demons from a Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter. Interestingly the woman contradicted, or back-chatted Jesus, and was commended for it! Perhaps most famous was his conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well. It shocked even the disciples. Not only was she a despised Samaritan, but she had a disreputable past.

Soft Hearts, Hard Feet

Jesus soft heart was in full view, on two occasions that we know about, that drove him to tears. We are told in John 11:35 that at the sight of the dead Lazarus, Jesus wept. Distressed already by the grief of Martha and Mary, as he gazed at his friend, he broke down in tears. And again, as he looked back at the sight of Jerusalem (John 11:35), and in mourning for what it had become, he wept.

I may have shared this before, but I have seen this from a Thai friend grieving for her country. We heard a deep wailing from her room one night and fearing that something was wrong we rushed in to find her face down on the floor crying out to God for the nation of Thailand. And she was doing something about it by heading up the work of an orphanage. Would that we have the same heart for our nation, Australia.

Soft heart, hard feet.

We cannot leave speaking of Jesus without mentioning that he had such a heart for me – and you – that he died for me who doesn't deserve it, even my depravity was often about decisions I've made. But he made the journey all the way to the cross for me, and all of us.

Very soft heart, very hard feet!

We have in the last few weeks celebrated the 80th Anniversary of the release of prisoners from the Nazi concentration camps such as Auschwitz and Buchenwald. We are forced to wonder again, "How could that happen?", "Weren't there Christians around who could speak out about such atrocities?"

You have probably heard of Martin Niemoller, a Lutheran pastor who in the early 30's supported Hitler's policies but seeing where it was heading made that famous quote, "They came for the socialists, but I did not speak out because I was not a socialist.

They came for the trade unionists, but I did not speak out because I was not a unionist.

They came for the Jews, but I did not speak out because I was not Jewish.

Then they came for me and there was no-one left to speak out for me."

It's a hard thing to say, but the Christians, by their silence and their inaction, were complicit in the holocaust.

Hard hearts and soft feet.

Forgive us Lord if we have hard hearts and soft feet when it comes to speaking out and speaking up for those who need justice and need a voice. The song below has the words, "..... break my heart for what breaks yours." We may not be able to go to the places where some of the world's worst injustices happen, but we can add our voice in many ways. We have a current epidemic of anti-Semitic terrorism – I can use my voice. Other issues which are eating away at the fabric of our society are also of epidemic proportions – abortion, the dilution of Biblical marriage, transgenderism, the criminalisation of prayer – all must break God's heart. We should be praying that God will break our hearts as well.

A couple of Saturdays ago 4 thousand people gathered outside Adelaide Oval and marched past Parliament House to have a voice for the unborn. It was a great opportunity for Christians to be seen standing up for those without a voice.

Soft hearts and hard feet.

Rodney Stark, who was not a Christian at the time, wrote a book entitled, “The Rise of Christianity”. He said that in the first few centuries AD, Christians were noted for their care of the poor, the sick, and the disadvantaged, and it was so counter-cultural at the time and people were so impressed by the witness of the followers of Jesus that they flocked to Christianity and the church grew exponentially. And why were they doing this? Because that was Jesus’ command for them, as it is for us – “Love God and love your neighbour.”

Do we?

1. I see the King of glory, coming on the clouds with fire
The whole earth shakes, the whole earth shakes.
I see his love and mercy washing over all our sin.
The people sing, the people sing
Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest (Repeat)
2. I see a generation rising up to take their place
With selfless faith, with selfless faith.
I see a near revival stirring as we pray and seek.
We're on our knees, we're on our knees.
3. Heal my heart and make it clean, open up my eyes to the things unseen.
Show me how to love like You have loved me,
Break my heart for what breaks yours,
Everything I am for Your kingdom's cause as I walk from earth into eternity.

Father, as I go from this place of worship, and step into all that the world throws at me, give me the strength and courage to stand for you, give me a heart that will grieve and break just as yours is. Make my heart soft and my feet hard. All through you my Father God, in Jesus, and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen

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