

Summer Series: Week One July 22nd – Theme: Disturb us

Call to Worship: Headlines

“Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Man who previously persecuted followers of Jesus, comes face to face with Jesus himself, in an amazing turn of events! Witnesses report a complete change in behaviour. Listen out for further updates when we’ll hear the full story later on.

Song 94: To God be the Glory

Prayer of Approach

Either:

Almighty, surprising and powerful God
In your power and through your creative Spirit
you brought all things to birth
creating vast galaxies
and microscopic cells
the loud majesty of thunder
and the gentle whisper of a baby’s breath
We praise and adore you
God in Christ Jesus
through your grace and love
you became fully human
you lived and loved as we live and love
you died for us and rose to lead us to abundant life
We praise and adore you
God the Holy Spirit
your life dances through the universe and through all time
you inspire and challenge us
nudge us and needle us
comfort and strengthen us
We praise and adore you.
Almighty, surprising and powerful God, God the three in one
We praise and adore you now and forever.
Amen

OR

God's voice called all things into existence and called them good
Let us worship God

Calling God, we praise you

God's voice called to our fathers and mothers, to Moses and Ruth, to Sarah and Abraham, to prophets and preachers, mothers and fathers, calling us to be his people

Let us worship God

Calling God, we praise you

God's voice, in Jesus, called to men and women in crowds and alone "Come and follow me

Let us worship God

Calling God, we praise you

God's voice, in Jesus, accepted the way of love saying 'your will be done'

Let us worship God

Calling God, we praise you

God's voice called all things into existence and called them good

Let us worship God

Calling God, we praise you

God's Spirit calls to us in our hearts and minds, in the voices of others and in the needs of the world saying "follow me"

Let us worship God

Calling God, we praise you

Amen

StF 436 Abba Father

Recognising the Spirit of God in our midst,
we turn our gaze to the one who yearns for us;
the one who causes us to change direction;
the one, from whom the words “follow me”,
requires immediate action.
We acknowledge God with us here in this place,
and ask that our hearts would be stirred,
our souls awakened,
and our minds renewed.
Come thou long expected Jesus,
un-expectant though we might be,
and give us a fresh glimpse into your heavenly feast.
Struck by the bright light of your presence, we say with Saul,
“Who are you Lord”
and pray that our eyes would be opened so that we may see you.

StF 395 Spirit of the living God

Dramatised Reading: Acts 9:1-19a

Narrator: Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him,

Voice: ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’

Saul: ‘Who are you, Lord?’

Voice: ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.’

Narrator: The men who were travelling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision,

Voice: ‘Ananias.’

Ananias: ‘Here I am, Lord.’

Voice: ‘Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.’

Ananias: 'Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name.'

Voice: 'Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; **16** I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.'

Narrator: So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, Ananias: 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.'

Narrator: And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptised, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Talk 1

"Follow me! The adventure began with these two simple yet life-changing, world-changing words. Ordinary people in the midst of their everyday lives were captivated by the person of Jesus and set out on a journey that would change both them and the course of human history" (Holy Habits, Preface p 11)

In Saul it was a call that turned his life upside down. Changed him from someone who felt threatened by and was a threat to the way of Christ into a follower and ambassador for it, one of its biggest champions who would change the course of the movement that would become the church.

For Ananias it was a call which required him to trust in God and be obedient to God's call even when it seemed like dangerous madness. It called on him to put his life in God's hands and see his enemy as a child of God.

For each person, then and now, the call comes individually, in each person's situation, calling each person by name. God does not call a crowd, a group or a nation. God calls Sue, Mark, Regina ... God calls each one of us as we are, God calls each one of us to be all that we can be. God's call is intensely personal and individual. It is disturbing partly because it speaks from a deep knowledge of us. It's disturbing also because it asks us to seek that deep knowledge of God and to be willing to turn our lives upside down to live in God's way and for God's world.

It's a call that's disturbing because it's active. Paul's call meant a life on the road travelling from place to place being challenged and challenging. At the beginning of Mark's Gospel we get the feeling that the disciples who are called should have been issued with running shoes - following Jesus for them literally required walking in his

footsteps at his speed as the work of God exploded around them with healings and acts of power.

We cannot be a disciple of Jesus theoretically. We cannot call ourselves dancers just because we've read books on dance theory and watched a few episodes of Strictly Come Dancing, no matter how much we may have enjoyed it or felt 'we were there with them'. We can only become a dancer by actually dancing, no matter how often we may stumble at first. Similarly, we cannot call ourselves disciples of Jesus unless we follow him actively seeking to walk or run in his footsteps.

Lucy Peppiatt puts it like this:

"Jesus calls us to follow him, and in this means following where he leads. It means 'following' in so many different ways. We follow him like we follow a dance partner. We follow his teachings. We follow the leading of the Spirit. We follow in his footsteps to the cross. We follow his example in loving the outcast, praying for the sick and delivering those who are oppressed by demons. We follow because he has won: by his love and his beauty, his power and his grace, his truth and forgiveness." (Lucy Peppiatt, *The Disciple*, Eugene: Cascade 2012, quoted in *Holy Habits* p20)

StF 440: Amazing Grace

Possible Video: Cross and the Switchblade

Francis Drake prayer

Disturb us, Lord, when we are too well pleased with ourselves,
When our dreams have come true
Because we have dreamed too little,
When we arrived safely
Because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when
With the abundance of things we possess
We have lost our thirst
For the waters of life;
Having fallen in love with life,
We have ceased to dream of eternity
And in our efforts to build a new earth,
We have allowed our vision
Of the new Heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,
To venture on wider seas

Where storms will show Your mastery;
Where losing sight of land,
We shall find the stars.
We ask You to push back
The horizons of our hopes;
And to push into the future
In strength, courage, hope, and love.

(attributed to Sir Francis Drake -1577)

Reflection on Francis Drake prayer

Do not disturb! This sign is a familiar one, in libraries, on locked doors in offices and homes. It is obvious in the avoidance of eye contact, in the muffled “sorry” as we shuffle past those with palms outstretched. The prayer attributed to Francis Drake which has just been read and which we will say together in a moment invites us to take a different approach – to actively encourage our being disturbed/distracted.

Saul, on his journey, was focused on the task ahead of him. He knew where he was going and what he would be doing. What happened next put a spanner into his well-thought out plans and sent him in a completely different direction.

How many of us sit quietly in pews hoping not to be noticed? Hoping that God would not ask ‘that’ of us? Yet what would be the result if we wantonly encouraged the interference of God in our lives and in our world?

We are okay with asking for God’s intervention in situations where we feel inadequate or unable to offer solutions. We live our lives in clearly marked packages, stopping to invite God only when the packages we have asked to be delivered go astray. Yet that is not the way of Christ.

The way of Christ is to not wait until the apple cart has been overturned but to instigate the moving of the apples in order that there would be some movement. Disturb us! That requires fluidity, flexibility, movement. There is nothing stagnant or staid about a disturbance. A disturbance usually involves a flurry of activity. It is a signal that something out of the ordinary has happened, and unexpectedly. It can sometime involve wonder and amazement.

Disturb us Lord,
lest we become so fixed in our ways
that your ways become tiresome and burdensome to us.
Disturb us, Lord,
to be moved by what moves you
so that we are no longer motivated by our plans or ideas.

Disturb us, Lord,
until we become so uncomfortable because of the activity of your Spirit
that we move from our own activity and join in with what you are doing.
Disturb us, and in doing so, make us hungry for you
so that we seek after you continuously .
We invite you this day, Lord
to come mess with our plans,
stir the waters, and make us whole. Amen.

Francis Drake prayer said by congregation

**Disturb us, Lord, when we are too well pleased with ourselves,
When our dreams have come true
Because we have dreamed too little,
When we arrived safely
Because we sailed too close to the shore.**

**Disturb us, Lord, when
With the abundance of things we possess
We have lost our thirst
For the waters of life;
Having fallen in love with life,
We have ceased to dream of eternity
And in our efforts to build a new earth,
We have allowed our vision
Of the new Heaven to dim.**

**Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,
To venture on wider seas
Where storms will show Your mastery;
Where losing sight of land,
We shall find the stars.
We ask You to push back
The horizons of our hopes;
And to push into the future
In strength, courage, hope, and love.**

(attributed to Sir Francis Drake -1577)

Prayers of Confession and Absolution

Loving and leading God
When we become complacent and content
following our wants rather than your needs

Forgive us and disturb us

When we close our ears to your urgent call
and wish to stay in our present comfort

Forgive us and disturb us

When we are deaf to the needs of your world

Forgive us and disturb us

Know that you are loved by God
know that God calls you as you are to become all that you can be
God forgives you and calls to live in God's way and work for God's Kingdom

Thanks be to God

StF 345: And can it be

Offering

Prayers of Adoration and Intercession

In the beginning God called and there was light and life, land and sea, plants and animals, women and men.

Loving God, we praise you for your creating calling power.

May we hear your call to be your partners in creation, caring for the world you have created and for every living thing.

Your kingdom come

Your will be done

As time passed God called women and men to live in the way of love, gave us commandments to follow and ways to care for each other and ourselves, to live with justice and in peace

Loving God, we praise you for your creating calling power.

May we hear your call to be your partners in this world. We pray for those places and people in need of justice and peace. We remember those who hold power that they may do so justly.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

When the time was right God in Jesus called fishermen and tax collectors, women and men to follow him as he taught God's way and brought God's healing and wholeness

Loving God

we praise you for your creating calling power.

May we hear your call to be your partners as we live with one another. We pray for those who are in need of healing and wholeness at this time. ...

Your kingdom come

Your will be done

Amen

StF 673: Will you come and follow me

Blessing and Sending Out

May the God, who calls you by name,
lead you from this place
knowing that you are
surrounded by the love of God,
strengthened by the power of God
and filled with the peace of God
Amen