

Opening prayer

Let us thank God for each other
as we share our lives here in worship,
as we come to pray and praise.
Let us thank God for the power of Jesus
and the gift of the Holy Spirit
to inspire and move us.
Amen.

This morning we are going to begin worship this morning by watching a piece of modern dance, the song being Light of the World sung by Lauren Daigle and performed by Midland University Dance. Followed by 2 worship songs.

Waymaker, sung by Michael Smith

Who you say I am sung by Hillsong

Our world is poised on the edge of a precipice and we need a miracle. We need the power of God right now, to help us navigate this new world. We need the light of the world to shine brightly into the darkness and give us hope. .

The mountains we are surrounded by seem impossibly high and we don't know how to navigate them. But we have a God who can do all things and we want to thank you Lord for being our loving Father, our rescuer. Amen.

Please stay seated for the dance performance and then, if you are able, please stand for the 2 following songs.

Dance video: <https://youtu.be/Au5myvsECI4>

Waymaker <https://youtu.be/XCpbeVFgs4E>

You are here, moving in our midst
I worship You, I worship You
You are here, working in this place
I worship You, I worship You
You are here, moving in our midst
I worship You, I worship You

You are here, working in this place
I worship You, I worship You

Waymaker, miracle worker
Promise keeper, light in the darkness
My God, that is who You are
Waymaker, miracle worker
Promise keeper, light in the darkness
My God, that is who You are

You are here, touching every heart
I worship You, hold my hands, I worship You
You are here, healing every heart
I worship You, I worship You
You are here, turning lives around
I worship You, I worship You
You are here, turning lives around
I worship You, I worship You

Waymaker, miracle worker
Promise keeper, light in the darkness
My God, that is who You are
Waymaker, miracle worker
Promise keeper, light in the darkness
My God, that is who You are

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Who You Say I Am <https://youtu.be/bytj0G6RmEk>

Who am I that the highest King
Would welcome me?
I was lost but He brought me in
Oh, His love for me
Oh, His love for me

Who the Son sets free, oh, is free indeed
I'm a child of God, Yes, I am

Free at last, He has ransomed me
His grace runs deep
While I was a slave to sin
Jesus died for me
Yes, He died for me

*Who the Son sets free, oh, is free indeed
I'm a child of God, Yes, I am
In my Father's house, there's a place for me
I'm a child of God, Yes, I am*

I am chosen, not forsaken
I am who You say I am
You are for me, not against me
I am who You say I am

I am chosen, not forsaken
I am who You say I am
You are for me, not against me
I am who You say I am
I am who You say I am

*Who the Son sets free, oh, is free indeed
I'm a child of God, Yes, I am
In my Father's house, there's a place for me
I'm a child of God, Yes, I am
In my Father's house, there's a place for me
I'm a child of God, Yes, I am*

I am chosen, not forsaken
I am who You say I am
You are for me, not against me
I am who You say I am

I am chosen, not forsaken
I am who You say I am
You are for me, not against me
I am who You say I am

I am chosen, not forsaken
I am who You say I am
You are for me, not against me
I am who You say I am
Oh, I am who You say I am
Yes, I am who You say I am

*Who the Son sets free, oh, is free indeed
I'm a child of God, Yes, I am*

*In my Father's house, there's a place for me
I'm a child of God, Yes, I am*

Ben Fielding, Reuben Morgan © 2017 Hillsong Music Publishing Australia (Admin. by Hillsong Music Publishing UK) CCLI:8026

The theme for today is mountains! And how to overcome them one boulder at a time.

Let us start with prayer;

We bring ourselves to a moment of quiet,
to a place of peace, to this place of safety and welcome.
We bring ourselves to cast off the cares of the world
and for a time to reflect on you, Lord God,
that our batteries may be recharged,
our direction be refocused and our energy renewed;
that we may let go of things that hold us back
and be free to care gently for those we share time with.
O God, we pray, renew us that we may renew others.

We thank you, Lord God,
for the gentle caring people in the world
whose love of you radiates from their lives.
For their gentleness of voice and touch,
for their gentle smile, their listening ear,
their quiet reassurance and understanding,
their patience and perseverance with us.
We thank you, Lord God,
that you have touched the lives of these people
and have enabled them to touch our lives
and bring us to our faith and enrich our knowledge of you.

The Lord's Prayer

Our reading today is Mathew 17: 14-20 New Living Translation
Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy

At the foot of the mountain, a large crowd was waiting for them. A man came and knelt before Jesus and said, "Lord, have mercy on my son. He has seizures and suffers terribly. He often falls into the

fire or into the water. So I brought him to your disciples, but they couldn't heal him."

Jesus said, "You faithless and corrupt people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me." Then Jesus rebuked the demon in the boy, and it left him.

From that moment the boy was well.

Afterward the disciples asked Jesus privately, "Why couldn't we cast out that demon?"

"You don't have enough faith," Jesus told them. "I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it would move.

Nothing would be impossible.

Amen

Sermon; How to move a mountain, one rock at a time

The tale of the mustard seed as read to us in our gospel reading this morning, is probably very familiar to us and I would like to unpick this story about faith this morning and see what we can see.

I do love a bit of fact finding and when I searched on Google, (other search engines are available), a reference to mountains in the Bible is made 500 times! They had strong spiritual significance because it was thought that being atop a mountain brought you nearer to God. It's been quite a while since I was on top of a mountain but I remember feeling just like that. There were plenty of mountains in and around that part of the world so it's not surprising that Jesus used them sometimes when making an analogy, when making a point.

In the reading Jesus says to his disciples that even if they had the tiniest bit of faith, as small as a mustard seed, then they could tell a mountain to move!

I think it's fair to say that on this occasion Jesus was truly exasperated with his disciples. Not known for losing his temper, with a couple of significant exceptions, we can feel his frustration when he says to them "O unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you!"

I guess we all know that feeling? As a parent we spend much of our lives explaining to our children, how things should be done! How

many times did I tell my son not to kick his shoes across the hall when he came in from the garden! Did he ever learn? Obviously this is a trivial example but here Jesus is just frustrated with them all.

Just prior to this story Jesus had walked to the top of a mountain along with Peter, James and his brother John where the transfiguration took place. A truly divine experience where Jesus was transformed, his face and bodily appearance glowed like the sun. Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with Jesus and then the voice of God spoke, saying "This is my son whom I love, with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!" The 3 apostle friends were not surprisingly terrified and fell to the floor. Jesus went to tell them not to be afraid and together they descended to the valley where they were met by a crowd of people. This had been a very divine experience where God spoke to them and essentially said how proud he was of his son and it's hard to imagine how Jesus must have felt. We cannot know.

Yet on coming down the mountain they were met by a crowd, along with the remaining 9 disciples. Out of the crowd came a man with a child who was clearly not well. Today we would probably have said he had epilepsy. His father was distraught and explained how his son was so ill that in his seizures he fell into the fires and also into the river. He had brought him to the apostles but they could do nothing. This poor man clearly loved the bones of his son and by faith he had brought him to the apostles for healing. And they had failed him.

Jesus understandably lost his temper with his disciples and railed at them for not having enough faith. He had just experienced a most divine occasion yet he comes down the mountain to find his disciples had failed at the first fence, no wonder he was annoyed. After all the teaching he had given, they still didn't understand his message.

Jesus promptly healed this poor child and sent them on their way.

Afterwards the disciples took time to speak with Jesus in private. I'm sure they felt a mix of emotions for after all, they had done what they had been taught, had done their best and the poor child had not been healed. They probably felt disheartened and lost. They

asked Jesus specifically “Why could we not drive the demon out?” Jesus then told them;

He told them, “It was because of your lack of faith. I promise you, if you have faith inside of you no bigger than the size of a small mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move away from here and go over there,’ and you will see it move. There is nothing you couldn’t do! The Passion Translation

This particular story ends at this point but it leaves us with a lot of unanswered questions.

We all talk about having faith don’t we? We probably all have a belief in God, anything from just a little to a lot. We probably agree that God is real and that Jesus was a real man, defined in history? Should we describe that sense of *knowing* as having faith? The Bible says otherwise. It tells us that faith is much more than purely believing, but must also include trusting in the power of God completely.

The disciples most certainly believed in Jesus and His powers through His father and they certainly would have applied that learning when trying to heal the child. The reason they were unable to heal him was because they tried to do so by their own strength and desire. They tried to do the impossible, without harnessing the power of God. How often do we all do that? I certainly do, by nature of being a “fixer” I have to consciously remember and apply this in my life’s experiences. Maybe others are the same.

We can learn so much about the nature and value of faith by thinking about the mustard seed in relation to the mountain. It’s such a tiny seed, at the time it was thought to be the smallest of all seeds. If we have even the tiniest amount of faith, as small as the mustard seed, that is enough to move a mountain! In other words, it is enough to change an impossible problem!

By having even a tiny amount of belief in God along with hope and total trust, even the toughest of problems can be overcome. How amazing is that!

The mustard seed doesn’t stay just a seed. It is watered and fed, the weeds around it are purposefully destroyed, the sun warms the soil it sits in and the plant grows. And as it grows it flowers,

becoming a thing of beauty to all who see it and ultimately it bears fruit. Seeds are formed and the whole cycle begins again.

The lesson Jesus gives us is simple and clear, we are to nurture ourselves like we would do a seed. Feed our faith by learning more about Jesus, there is so much we can learn! Be purposeful in getting rid of things that hinder our growth. Time is a thief and so many of us say we don't have enough.

Sometimes we feel that our faith has been trampled on for some reason, but I know that if we persist in believing and trusting in God then our faith will still grow. God can do all things. Sometimes it seems that despite our prayers, despite our belief and trust in God we don't see the change we desire..... It can be very hard. Hold on tight, God's timing is not the same as ours.

We all have mountains in our lives that we must climb, move or circumnavigate. Some of us have mountains that are just so big, so high, and seem unnavigable. Some mountains are so treacherous it would be foolishness to try and overcome them. These mountains could be personal difficulties of all descriptions such as mounting debt, the loss of a job, declining health or a difficult relationship for example.

The mountain we are facing could be a global problem that affects each one of us. Climate change is an example. This pandemic is clearly another that has shaken us all to our roots. We wouldn't be human if we weren't shaken. And this global problem hasn't even been a sprint but is now a marathon with an indeterminate end. We hope and pray for a vaccine.

We are all suffering in so many different ways.

What seems impossible or endlessly tragic to many, has no place in our hearts, or our souls. Jesus has taught us that with true faith, which is an absolute belief and trust in God, the impossible can be made possible.

The prophetess, Julian of Norwich said "“And all will be well”, “all manner of things shall be well”, but in God's timing, which is not the same as ours.

However we are feeling right now, there are things we can do to increase our faith in God.

- 1) Have faith in God, in his person, purpose and power.
Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart;
do not depend on your own understanding.
Seek his will in all you do,
and he will show you which path to take.
- 2) Identify and accept our mountains as too big for us to handle.
Romans 8:28
“And we know that God causes everything to work
together for the good of those who love God and are called
according to his purpose for them.”
- 3) Invite God in to the problem and surrender our control and
remove our pride.
Luke 18:14 “For those who exalt themselves will be humbled,
and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”
- 4) Take action!
James 2: 17 we read “So you see, faith by itself isn’t enough.
Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.
- 5) Hold our course steady,
Galatians 6:9 it says “So let’s not get tired of doing what is
good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if
we don’t give up.”

One day soon, very soon, we are going to see the King! As our faith grows our perspectives will change and the mountains we face won’t seem so big after all.

Amen

Our final song is going to be, The Blessing with British Sign Language, which adds another dimension. Please stand if you are able.

“The Blessing” <https://youtu.be/g9a8dRACF18>

The Lord bless you and keep you
Make His face shine upon you
And be gracious to you
The Lord turn His face toward you
And give you peace

The Lord bless you and keep you
Make His face shine upon you
And be gracious to you
The Lord turn His face toward you
And give you peace

Amen, amen, amen
Amen, amen, amen

The Lord bless you and keep you
Make His face shine upon you
And be gracious to you
The Lord turn His face toward you
And give you peace

Amen, amen, amen
Amen, amen, amen
Amen, amen, amen
Amen, amen, amen

May His favour be upon you
And a thousand generations
And your family and your children
And their children, and their children

May His favour be upon you
And a thousand generations
And your family and your children
And their children, and their children

May His favour be upon you
And a thousand generations
And your family and your children
And their children, and their children

May His favour be upon you
And a thousand generations
And your family and your children
And their children, and their children

May His presence go before you
And behind you, and beside you
All around you, and within you

He is with you, He is with you

In the morning, in the evening
In your coming, and your going
In your weeping, and rejoicing
He is for you, He is for you

He is for you, He is for you
He is for you, He is for you
He is for you, He is for you

Amen, amen, amen
Amen, amen, amen

May His favour be upon you
And a thousand generations
And your family and your children
And their children, and their children

May His presence go before you
And behind you, and beside you
All around you, and within you
He is with you, He is with you

In the morning, in the evening
In your coming, and your going
In your weeping, and rejoicing
He is for you, He is for you

He is for you, He is for you
He is for you, He is for you
He is for you, He is for you
He is for you, He is for you

Amen, amen, amen
Amen, amen, amen

May His favour be upon you
And a thousand generations
And your family and your children
And their children, and their children

May His presence go before you
And behind you, and beside you

All around you, and within you
He is with you, He is with you

In the morning, in the evening
In your coming, and your going
In your weeping, and rejoicing
He is for you, He is for you

He is for you, He is for you
He is for you, He is for you
He is for you, He is for you
He is for you, He is for you

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The offering prayer

Everlasting Father, thank you that you are the light of the world, guiding our steps on your path. Your word says that the earth is yours, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to you. We recognize everything we have belongs to you. We acknowledge that our very lives belong to you. We now offer back to you a portion of what you have given us. May God the Father prepare our journey, Jesus the Son guide our footsteps and the Holy Spirit watch over us, on every path that we follow. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

The blessing

From the security of this place, with friends and family and our faith community, be with us, eternal God, as we step into the world of 'mixed-up all-sorts'. May we be kind and caring to all people, no matter how they treat us. May we be true to ourselves and hold our heads high, sharing your love and your care with all those we meet.

Amen.