

# PAPER CHURCH

## **On the Shoulders of Giants - Joan Chittister**

*Sunday 28 June 2020*

### **Some Tips**

Our hope is that this is a resource that will help us all to engage meaningfully with God's word for us and invite an open and experimental sense of worship today. Use it in a way that feels comfortable and helpful to you. Here are a couple of suggestions that might help the process.

#### ***Get prepared for worship***

Have your Bible close by, perhaps set up some favourite music to listen to, find some food and drink to have during communion. It doesn't have to be bread and grape juice; it could be whatever is available (tea and a biscuit) to use in this symbolic time.

#### ***Get into a 'sacred' space***

When we are not physically in a dedicated worship space (like a church building), it is important to mentally and spiritually shift into a sense of worship.

Be intentional. Sit somewhere where you feel receptive and responsive to God (e.g. a cosy chair or outside in the garden). Have some visual representation of God (perhaps a small cross, your Bible, a symbol or image). Start with a few moments of silence and deep breathing.

#### ***Consider your environment***

Consider your environment and what will work for you. If you have others in your house (house-mates/family), consider sharing this time with them, each reading or participating as appropriate. You might simply reflect individually, in your own time and space. Afterwards, you might connect with others through technology to share your reflections, or an encouragement, with them.

## Call To Worship

*Based on Psalm 100*

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.  
Worship the Lord with gladness;  
come before the Lord with joyful songs.

Know that the Lord is God.  
It is God who made us, and we are God's;  
we are God's people, the sheep of God's pasture.

Enter God's gates with thanksgiving  
and God's courts with praise;  
give thanks to God and praise God's name.

For the Lord is good and the Lord's love endures forever;  
The Lord's faithfulness continues through all generations.

## Song: Great Is Thy Faithfulness

Great is Thy faithfulness  
Great is Thy faithfulness  
Morning by morning  
New mercies I see  
All I have needed  
Thy hand hath provided  
Great is Thy faithfulness  
Lord unto me

Great is Thy faithfulness  
O God my Father  
There is no shadow  
Of turning with Thee  
Thou changest not  
Thy compassions they fail not  
As Thou hast been  
Thou forever wilt be

Summer and winter  
And springtime and harvest  
Sun moon and stars  
In their courses above  
Join with all nature  
In manifold witness  
To Thy great faithfulness  
Mercy and love

Pardon for sin  
And a peace that endureth  
Thy own dear presence  
To cheer and to guide  
Strength for today  
And bright hope for tomorrow  
Blessings all mine  
With ten thousand beside

CCLI Song # 18723  
Thomas Obediah Chisholm | William Marion Runyan  
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Music: 1923. Renewed 1951 Hope Publishing Company  
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## **Bible Reading: Psalm 8 (NIV)**

*If you are with others perhaps take turns to read different sections*

Lord, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory  
in the heavens.  
Through the praise of children and infants  
you have established a stronghold against your enemies,  
to silence the foe and the avenger.  
When I consider your heavens,  
the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars,  
which you have set in place,  
what is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care for them?

You have made them a little lower than the angels  
and crowned them with glory and honor.  
You made them rulers over the works of your hands;  
you put everything under their feet:  
all flocks and herds,  
and the animals of the wild,  
the birds in the sky,  
and the fish in the sea,  
all that swim the paths of the seas.

Lord, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

## Message

*Penny Martin*

Welcome to the last in our series of looking at giants of faith whose shoulders we can stand on today and into the future. The whole point of this few weeks has been to encourage us with a sense of perspective – how can we learn from others what it means to come at faith, press into difficulty, exercise resilience, put our beliefs into transformative action. A privilege to stand on the shoulders of those going before us.

Jesus himself looked back (we touched on this idea back in our Lenten series) – as he quoted the words of scripture, and used examples from Jewish history – there were many giants: Noah, Abraham, Esther, Jeremiah, of course then Jesus himself that many have looked back on. Then we know we have other giants of faith like Paul and James, moving on through history we looked at Augustine, then Dorothy Day, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and today we look at an incredible, active and vocal giant of faith still living today – Sister Joan Chittister.

We could have included so many more – Martin Luther the great reformer, William Wilberforce and his contribution to the abolition of slavery, Julian of Norwich or Hildegard of Bingen – amazing women of faith ... etc. etc.

Today we have moved into more current times. The giant we are looking at today is Sister Joan Chittister (image left)– a Benedictine nun.

Chittister was born in 1936 to Daniel and Loretta Daugherty. Her biological father died when she was very young and her mother remarried Harold Chittister. Chittister describes her step-father as an abusive alcoholic, and her childhood is one marked by domestic violence and fear. It was not until she was 75 years of age (in 2011) that Chittister finally spoke of this aspect of her childhood.



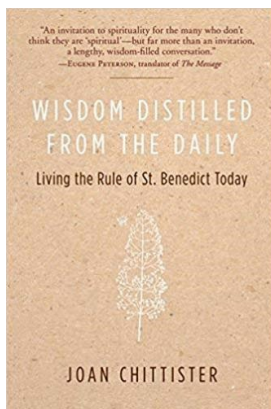
She was shaped her whole life by the love and care of the Catholic sisters that were part of her early life.

Kathleen Sprows Cummings in her writing on Chittister says this:

*Joan's earliest memories are of the Sisters of Mercy comforting her at her father's funeral. Her fourth-grade teacher, a Sister of St. Joseph, secretly laundered her uniform when she spilled ink on it, avoiding a confrontation at home ... her teachers noticed and cultivated her manifest intellectual gifts. Sisters at Erie's Benedictine Academy provided a work-study job to cover her high-school tuition, and, after one of them noticed she was skipping the noon meal in the cafeteria, arranged for her to have both lunch and dinner free of charge. Soon after she entered the Benedictines, the community provided support as she battled polio. The community eventually also sponsored her postgraduate education ...*

*(Joan Chittister. Her Journey from Certainty to Faith, Commonweal, April 25, 2016.)*

It was this influence that led Chittister to become a Benedictine and devote her considerable gifts to advocating for justice and equality, challenging all who would silence women and those on the margins of society. Her work has been embedded within the Catholic church where she has openly challenged how the Church sees the place of women, she is a prolific writer, speaker and activist, former prioress of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie she founded and directs Benetvision – a resource and research hub for contemporary spirituality.



One of Chittister's most beloved books is called "Wisdom Distilled From The Daily – Living the Rule of St Benedict Today". In this book she advocates a way of life defined by simple spiritual practices that deepen us toward spiritual growth – a call for modern believers to embrace some of the practices of those who have gone before us. She contends that such a commitment may just help us:

*to live calmly in the middle of chaos, productively in the arena of waste, lovingly in a maelstrom of individualism, and gently in a world full of violence ...*

*Benedictine monasticism is as much a way of **seeing and working and living** as it is a way of praying. It is a spiritual vision that affects a person's whole style of life.*

*(J Chittister)*

A Psalm of seeing and working and living ...

### **Psalm 8**

- 1 Lord, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory  
in the heavens.
- 2 Through the praise of children and infants  
you have established a stronghold against your enemies,  
to silence the foe and the avenger.
- 3 When I consider your heavens,  
the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars,  
which you have set in place,
- 4 what is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care for them?
- 5 You have made them a little lower than the angels  
and crowned them with glory and honor.
- 6 You made them rulers over the works of your hands;  
you put everything under their feet:
- 7 all flocks and herds,  
and the animals of the wild,

8 the birds in the sky,  
and the fish in the sea,  
all that swim the paths of the seas.

9 Lord, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!



The gift of Joan Chittister for us today ...

In her most recent book “The Time is Now. The Call of Uncommon Courage” Sister Joan says that each of us people of faith today have three choices when faced with the complexities of the world we live in, let her words speak to us today:

*At every crossroad, every one of us has three possible options: The first choice is to quit a road that is going somewhere we do not want to go. We can move on in another direction. We can distance ourselves from the difficulties of it all. WE can leave the mission unfinished.*

*The second alternative is to surrender to the forces of resistance that obstruct our every step toward wholeness. We can succumb to the fatigue of the journey that comes from years of being ignored, ridiculed, or dismissed for our ideas. We can go quietly into oblivion, taking on the values of the day or going silent in the face of them. This choice, in other words, is to crawl into a comfortable cave with nice people and become a church, a culture, a society within a society. We can just hunker down together and wait for the storm to calm down, go by, and become again the nice warm womb of our beginnings.*

*The third choice is to refuse to accept a more deterioration of the present and insist on celebrating the coming of an unknown, but surely holier, future. The third choice is to go steadfastly on, even when we are not sure what we will find at the end of it. The third choice is to follow the path of the prophets of old. It is to echo those who came before us who spoke the voice and vision of God for the world ...*

*(Joan Chittister, The Time is Now. The Call of Uncommon Courage, 2019).*

Each of the giants we have looked at have this in common, they all chose (choose) the third option ... So ... what about us? Psalm 8 calls us to lift our vision beyond just what is distracting and confronting, to see the wonder and abounding power of the God of the universe and to press deeply into the hope of that vision for our world.

I don't know about you but I want to be one of those names ... I want to be one of the people who chooses to press on, to follow that path laid out by other giants of faith ... I want to be a person who creates a vision of hope for the people in the world. I want to be known for the fact that I wasn't afraid to speak truth to power, to stand up for the marginalised, to love my neighbour, to practice prayerfulness, not to look pious, but to deepen my connection to the God of hope, courage and transformation.

As we now look beyond these giants of faith into what is next, how have our imaginations been inspired and shaped to some new possibilities? This is where we are being called as a community. We have had some interesting and challenging perspectives but our time is now – to choose to step purposefully and practically into some new places ...

***Sending:***

*When we are able to choose,  
When we are able to stand,  
When we are able to forgive one another,  
When we are able to bring peace and perspective to a hurting world,  
When we bring newness to the wilting and dry areas of life,  
See – God makes all things new!  
Go in the strength of God’s love and God’s promise of love and peace  
Amen.*

## **Communion**

***Andrea Salmon***

***Have some food and drink, and pen and paper, available for this time***

If you’re able, join us at 11am Sunday through Zoom to share in communion together at [rngwd.com/communion](http://rngwd.com/communion) or after you have shared in communion below, consider who you can call to have a chat as you would on a Sunday morning after a church service.

Have you got a pen and paper handy? Grab one and write your name. Write it again smaller, now print it, can you write it with your non-dominant hand? Write it bigger.

Your name, that’s your name. Your parents chose that name for you and you have grown into your name.

Your friends and family know your name but other people know your name too, people you might not have even met, but many that you have met. People who may actually list you as someone on whose shoulders they stand, someone who has spoken into their lives, someone who they look up to as an example of faith.

And how good is it when someone remembers your name? And calls you by name. I am hopeless at remembering names but it is something I strive to do because I know how much I value being called by my name.

Psalm 8 concluded with Our Lord and Ruler, your name is wonderful everywhere on earth. My verse of the day from Proverbs 18, verse 10 says the name of the Lord is a fortified tower, the righteous run to it and are safe.

And God knows us by name, his mission, his blessings, his grace and forgiveness is for us as it has been for individuals throughout the ages. We are connected across the ages, and as we share in

communion today we also are connected with the giants of the past, the giants in the here and now and the giants who are yet to come.

Today I would like us to share our individual emblems together, in unity, in community with all those who have gone before and all those still coming. Have you got them nearby?

In Marks' gospel we read the account of the last supper and you can add your name to the space I leave.

During the meal Jesus took some bread in his hands. He blessed the bread and broke it. Then he gave it to his disciples and said, "Take this (*insert name here*) It is my body."

Let us share in our symbol of the bread today.

And Jesus picked up a cup of wine and gave thanks to God. He gave it to his disciples, and they drank some. Let us also drink together.

Jesus said, "This is my blood which is poured out for many people including you, and with it God makes his agreement. From now on," Jesus said, "I won't drink any wine until I drink the new wine in God's Kingdom."

Will you join me in prayer?

*Dear Lord Jesus, we do praise your name and we are so glad that you know each of us by name. We're challenged by that, we cannot hide. But we don't want to hide, we want you to know us and we want to know you. We know you love us, we know Jesus was sacrificed for us, and we are full of thanks. We share these symbols today of your body and blood and we pause and remember. We reflect on your goodness and mercy, we bring our praise and adoration.*

*And we also bring our need, our cares and our concerns, our hurts and our burdens. We lay them before you.*

*We need you, the world needs you. Help us be the people you need and want us to be, to be the shoulders knowingly and unknowingly that others can stand on to get closer to you, not in a contrived way, but in a real and genuine way as we live our lives as your people.*

*Thank you Lord Jesus for knowing us and loving us.*

*Amen*



## Song: It Is Well

Grander earth has quaked before  
Moved by the sound of His voice  
Seas that are shaken and stirred  
Can be calmed and broken for my regard

Through it all through it all  
My eyes are on You  
Through it all through it all  
It is well  
Through it all through it all  
My eyes are on You  
And it is well with me

Far be it from me to not believe  
Even when my eyes can't see  
And this mountain that's in front of me  
Will be thrown into the midst of the sea

So let go my soul and trust in Him  
The waves and wind still know His name

It is well with my soul  
It is well with my soul  
It is well with my soul  
It is well it is well with my soul

CCLI Song # 7021972

Horatio Gates Spafford | Kristene DiMarco | Philip Paul Bliss

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## Connect cards online

*Click this link or enter it into your web browser [rngwd.com/connect](http://rngwd.com/connect).*

We love to know that you have been able to connect through worship today. Please click on the link (or enter it into your web browser) to our online connect cards letting us know which ways you have been able to worship, and if you want to let us know how we can praying with you.

Thank you!