

Teddington Circuit Worship at Home Sheets

Sunday 21st June 2020

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you. With thanks to Mark Gilks, Vicci Davidson, Hazel Greasby and the Connexional team for their contributions.

Opening Prayer

Lord, let us stand tall and firm in our belief as we worship you. We thank you Lord that you are the way and that you fill us with your love. We are yours and we worship you. Let us give you all the praise as we share your glory with others. Amen

Hymn: 467 I need thee every hour

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6B9HbPskX5c>

I need thee every hour,
most gracious Lord;
no tender voice like thine
can peace afford:
I need thee, O I need thee,
every hour I need thee;
O bless me now, my Saviour;
I come to thee.

I need thee every hour;
stay thou near by;
temptations lose their power
when thou art nigh:

I need thee every hour,
in joy or pain;
come quickly and abide,
or life is vain:

I need thee every hour;
teach me thy will,
and thy rich promises
in me fulfil:

Annie Sherwood Hawks (1835-1918)

We pray together

Beautiful God, we praise and worship you – your loving kindness and mercy is without end. Your faithfulness to us is unending. We praise you for your eternal love.

We recognise before you, and thank you, for where your image is clear in us – where we radiate you in the way that we live. We recognise too where we mar that image – with selfishness, unkindness, a lack of love.

We say sorry in a moment of quiet and ask your forgiveness.

We thank you that you say to us each, 'my child your sins are forgiven, go in peace and sin no more'.

We thank you that you give us your Spirit to help us know you and be closer to you.

We thank you that when we come to you, you don't wait for us to be clever enough, good enough, or perfect enough – but you accept us as we are in complete Love.

We thank you for people who have shown us what your love is like, remembering with thanks those who have died who have shown us what your love is like. We bring our prayers in Jesus name. Amen.

Today's Reading from the Old Testament: Psalm 86

Today's Gospel Reading: Matthew 10:24-39

Time to Reflect

Why would anybody want to come to church to hear or watch on online a load of doom and gloom? Isn't being a Christian about being happy, singing upbeat songs and clapping a lot?

Sometimes the readings set for Sunday Worship are light, almost fluffy. As it happens today's Gospel reading is not like that at all.

Jesus is preparing his disciples to go out as missionaries and spread the word, his word. The disciples are keen, but very green, so Jesus is amazingly blunt with them. They get warnings about opposition and division in language that frankly doesn't sound much like the Jesus I learnt about at Sunday School.

Now we can simply file this passage under the label "difficult", but the trouble is that this piece of the

Gospel is red-hot relevant today. So, let's have a look at the briefing that Jesus is giving his disciples (that's us, by the way!).

Have you ever been in a discussion with a group of friends when one of them seeks to play the trump card by saying "Well the Bible says...." Then they trot out a short sentence from the Holy Book. The thing is that this sound-bite way of using the Bible is very tempting. It can be used to justify the most outrageous action. I once heard an interview with a leading BNP supporter, who was explaining his hatred of Muslims. He mentioned in passing that he was a churchgoer, and the interviewer queried if what he was espousing was in line Jesus's teaching about love. Ah! replied the BNP Leader "Jesus said he did not come to bring peace but a sword!". Sadly, the interviewer was not able to crush this foul piece of nonsense.

It may be a bit tiresome, but we know that when we read a particular Bible passage, we need to look at the context. We need to understand what it meant at the time it was written, what it might mean now set against similar passages on the same issue. So, when we read that tricky verse 34 of our passage (Matthew 10:34)

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have come not to bring peace, but a sword."

we need to recall that Jesus didn't want Peter's sword at Gethsemane. We also call Jesus "The Prince of Peace", indeed that's what the angels sang when he was born. The sword here is a metaphor. Jesus is talking about conflict and division. It may be helpful to think about the concept of the sword of the Spirit which Paul writes about in Ephesians (6:17) as the Word of God. In Hebrews (4:12) we read "The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword.....it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart".

The simple meaning of Jesus' briefing for us modern day Christians is that we too must expect division and opposition. The world, Jesus warns will treat us as it treated him. Indeed, we know full well about the thousands who are persecuted for their Christian faith today. But does that mean us? Oh yes it does! Now the opposition to us is likely to be apathy rather than antipathy, ridicule rather than physical assault. The media love a scandal involving a Church leader and treat the word "evangelical" as meaning at best a religious nutter or at worse a right-wing bigot. Blind eyes are so often the feature of news reports about

charitable works that happen to be undertaken by Christian groups. The BBC, for example, has tried hard not to mention the name of the Methodist Church that played and is still playing a major compassionate role with the Grenfell community.

In the light of such opposition it is telling that Jesus repeats a command that he uses more than others. You might imagine that it's something like

- Behave yourself
- Study the scriptures
- Say your prayers
- Give more money away

No! It is the command we find three times in today's Gospel reading:

- "Don't be afraid"

Many early disciples and many Christians since have died for their faith, but Jesus says "Don't be afraid". People can hurt our bodies and our minds, but not our souls. So, when you hear depressing tales of the fall in Church attendance - "Don't be afraid". When you hear of the rising number of Covid-19 deaths - "Don't be afraid". The Gospel will be opposed, there will be division in our families but "Don't be afraid". One day your faith, your loyalty, your mission which is now known to God will be known to all.

The challenges we face do not require us to unsheathe a physical sword. We are called to be like Jesus and bring his love, and our love to the tough times. We study the life of Jesus so that we will know how to be faithful in the face of inevitable opposition, suffering and death. This is the way we bear witness to the power and presence of God.

We should remind ourselves, time and again, we are precious to God. The hairs on our head are numbered. We are precious and our future is secure. By the Grace of God and our belief we are in the Kingdom of Heaven now! Don't be afraid.

Take a time to sit quietly

Gracious and loving God, as we look around the world at the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, at the racial discrimination which has revealed so much pain in this country as well as elsewhere, at people caught in difficult immigration situations and others trafficked by unscrupulous people to lives of slavery and

bondage, as we hear of increases in domestic violence and lack of support for care homes, it is hard to hear those words "Do not be afraid for you are of more value than many sparrows" without recognising that a promise which we might be able to claim with joy is not supported by evidence as shown in many places in this country and across the world. The comfort which we may take in it seems insufficient for the pain so many are carrying and neither are we prepared to say that it will be alright on the other side of glory and that is sufficient. Recognising that we live in your timing of now and not yet, and giving thanks for the knowledge of your presence in our lives, we ask you to give us the wisdom to discern our place in your Covenant that we too may work towards a future where all can be comforted by your message to us: Do not be afraid. You are of more value than many sparrows." Amen

Eternal God, we come to pray as your co-workers and co-carers in your world. We know you already care and are already there in the places and with the people for whom we pray.

We pray for:
Hampton Church
The Tea and Memories Project
And the country of Mexico as it faces the challenge of COVID-19 and organized crime.

In a moment of silence we pray for people suffering, in pain, depression or anxiety. We pray for all those who work to alleviate suffering.

We pray for communities struggling in poverty, overcrowding and hunger, for people feeling disconnected and for those who are working together to bring comfort, food and help.

We pray for governments and those in power around the world, for wisdom and the desire to put the wellbeing of their people first and to work together with other countries in peace.

We bring all our prayers, in trust and confidence, in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer
Our Father

Hymn: Listen to 41 Blessed be your name

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnWKeHSOXu8>

Blessed be your name
in the land that is plentiful,
where your streams of abundance flow,
blessed be your name.

And blessed be your name
when I'm found in the desert place,
though I walk through the wilderness,
blessed be your name.

Every blessing you pour out
I'll turn back to praise.
And when the darkness closes in, Lord,
still I will say:

*Blessed be the name of the Lord,
blessed be your name.
Blessed be the name of the Lord,
blessed be your glorious name.*

Blessed be your name
when the sun's shining down on me,
when the world's 'all as it should be,'
blessed be your name.
And blessed be your name
on the road marked with suffering,
though there's pain in the offering,
blessed be your name.

Every blessing you pour out
I'll turn back to praise.
And when the darkness closes in, Lord,
still I will say:

Blessed be the name of the Lord ...

You give and take away,
you give and take away.
My heart will choose to say,
'Lord, blessed be your name.'

Blessed be the name of the Lord ...

Matt Redman (b. 1974) and Beth Redman

A prayer of blessing

May Immanuel God be with us, bless us with the deep heart-knowledge that God is with us, and as we share the reality of ourselves with God, may we know ourselves held and beloved. Amen

Original Materials by Ruth Yorke

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