

Teddington Circuit Worship at Home

Sunday 5th July 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 David Innes and the Connexional team for their contributions.

Opening Prayer

Jesus, I come to you to celebrate your love and to receive your word.

You taught that we must worship God in spirit. I long to worship with your people, but I know you are with me, in these difficult times. Amen.

Hymn: Love divine, all loves excelling (Singing the Faith No 503)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CNfpUrKzpM>

Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return, and never,
never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation,
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation,
perfectly restored in thee:
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Let us pray together:

Lord God, I am in wonder at the world you have created and the life you have given me. I thank you

for that gift of life and the joy of sharing my life with others.

I have not always lived my life as you would wish. Yet, even as I confess this to you, I know your forgiveness by the suffering and death of your Son, Jesus Christ, my Saviour. Amen.

Today's letter to an Early Church: Romans 7. 15-25a

Today's Gospel Reading: Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30

Time to Reflect

Matthew 11: 28-30

You can never get it right! If we throw ourselves into the wider community, we can be criticised for compromising too much. If we stick seriously with our church life, we can be criticised for being otherworldly. There will always be someone who thinks that we haven't got the balance right. We are in church too much or we are out partying too much.

It was no different in Jesus' day. John the Baptist had been very straight with people about the need to turn back to God and change their lifestyles. Crowds had flocked to him, but not everyone liked it. Herod certainly didn't like John's comments about his sister-in-law and had him arrested. Although Herod still found John entertaining, his dancing niece would soon avenge the family's honour.

Whilst in prison, John the Baptist wanted to be sure that Jesus was the messiah. He had pointed his own disciples to Jesus as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world". Had he pointed them in the right direction? His disciples are sent to check out Jesus. Jesus points them to the evidence. In those days, anyone who was disabled would have been excluded from the temple. The outcasts are now being re-included into society through Jesus' healings.

As John's disciples take the news back to him in prison, Jesus turns to the crowd and explains John's significance. He is the promised messenger who would prepare the way for the messiah. He is the greatest person so far, but anyone who enters God's kingdom will be greater.

John was criticised for being too strict with his faith. Jesus was criticised for being too much of a party animal. He spent too much of his time with all of the wrong people, the tax collectors and sinners as they were then known. They welcomed him and loved him and listened to him, but that was too much for the religious leaders. Jesus sums it all up with a strange poem.

*We played the pipe for you and you did not dance;
We sang a dirge and you did not mourn.*

Jesus bemoans Chorazin and Bethsaida, the towns that wouldn't respond to his message, but goes on to praise his Father that only those who respond like little children can receive his message. Jesus turns our values upside down. Those who are wise and learned are too clever for their own good. The message is too complicated for them. Jesus will reveal the Father to those who simply trust in him.

We shouldn't be disappointed or even surprised if people don't respond to our message. We know that from the parable of the sower. Too much of the seed fell on the path or on stony ground or became lost amongst the weeds. Many will ignore our message. Some who respond may not stick with it. But some seed found good soil and grew to produce much fruit.

We too are called to sow the seed of Jesus' message. Sometimes, we'll enjoy joining in with the party whilst we do so. Sometimes we may need to be more serious and challenging. Keeping our balance is a difficult tightrope to walk. We need the Spirit's help to guide us. What is the message that we are to share? It is simply to come to Jesus. He conveniently sums it up in the last verse of this chapter. We need to hear it for ourselves today, as well as sharing it with others.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

I thank you Lord for the gift of your Son: for His life, His sufferings and death and for His Resurrection and Ascension, for the witness, salvation and hope He gives.

I thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit to those who have come to you, and especially for the gift of that Spirit in your Church.

I rejoice in the work and witness of your Church and pray that it may continue to strive to fulfil your work and proclaim your Love.

I pray for the needs of the world, thinking especially at this time of those affected by the Coronavirus, but remembering too all who suffer including those whose plight seemingly goes unnoticed. Be with all those suffering in any way. Especially be with.....
(people known to me)

Be with those whose lives impact others: leaders in government, or the workplace, health care workers, teachers, emergency workers and all those on whom people depend. Grant them the wisdom and the strength to know and to follow your way.

Lord, I commend all men, women and children to your unfailing love through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer
Our Father

Hymn: Listen to "Lord of the Dance" Singing the Faith no 247 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLGqavkDszU> or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

I danced in the morning
when the world was begun,
and I danced in the moon
and the stars and the sun;
and I came down from heaven
and I danced on the earth,
at Bethlehem
I had my birth.

'Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the Dance.'
'and I'll lead you all wherever you may be,
and I'll lead you all in the Dance,' said he.

I danced for the scribe
and the pharisee,
but they would not dance
and they wouldn't follow me;
I danced for the fishermen,
for James and John;
they came with me
and the Dance went on.

I danced on the Sabbath
and I cured the lame:
the holy people

said it was a shame.
They whipped and they stripped
and they hung me on high,
and they left me there
on a Cross to die.

I danced on a Friday
when the sky turned black;
it's hard to dance
with the devil on your back.
They buried my body
and they thought I'd gone;
but I am the Dance
and I still go on.

They cut me down
and I leapt up high;
I am the life
that'll never, never die;
I'll live in you
if you'll live in me;
I am the Lord
of the Dance, said he.

Sydney Carter (1915-2004)

A prayer of blessing

May the blessing of God the Father, Son and Holy
Spirit rest and remain with each of us sharing His
worship today and always.

Original Materials by Ralph Frankland

Hymns reproduced under CCLi 1144191