

Teddington Circuit Worship at Home Sheets

Sunday 12th 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, Mark Gilks, the Connexional team and others.

Call to Worship

Rejoice! There is now no condemnation in Christ Jesus.

Hymn: STF 685 In Christ there is no east or west

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=3TiiH1nV17w>

In Christ there is no east or west,
in him no south or north,
but one great fellowship of love
throughout the whole wide earth.

In him shall true hearts everywhere
their high communion find;
his service is the golden cord
close-binding humankind.

Join hands then all the human race,
whate'er your nation be;
all children of the living God
are surely kin to me.

In Christ now meet both east and west,
in him meet south and north;
all Christlike souls are one in him,
throughout the whole wide earth.

John Oxenham, pseud. (1852-1941)

A time of prayer

Lord, we praise and adore you.

In Jesus, you reveal your love and your kindness to us.
His light shines for all to see.
Through him, you shed light on our path.

Your Spirit brings us life and peace
Led by your Spirit, we are your children
Adopted into your family,
we cry, Abba, Father.

Accept our praise, Father,
Show us your rich truth
and teach us your ways.

As we think of the times that we have let you down,
We thank you that you are faithful to forgive.

We hear the grand words,

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free”.

Humbled and weak, yet forgiven
May we know your strength.

As we seek to follow you,
Whatever happens along the way,
May you shield us.

So may we live in your freedom
every moment of every day.

Amen.

Today's Reading from the New Testament

Romans 8.1-11

Today's Gospel Reading:

Matthew 13.1-9 & 18-23

Time to Reflect

One of the great childhood pleasures is to have a story read to you. The reader gives not only their time and attention but also a warm comfort of a story that is often well known to the child. There is much assurance in the middle of the story when things are looking gloomy for the hero; for the child, who often knows favourite stories word perfect, knows that good will prevail and the heroine will live happily ever after.

Retelling stories is so common. Superhero films are huge box-office. Spiderman, the Incredible Hulk, the X-Men, and many others are enchanting young audiences today. Yet most of characters and tales date back to the 1950/1960's in magazines like Marvel and DC comics.

The storylines follow the well-known pattern of good triumphing over evil, even if evil seems to be winning for most of the time.

Jesus used stories to get over the main messages of his ministry. We call these stories parables, and they are often very well known. Jesus uses this story telling technique to explain the nature of the Kingdom of God, and what folk must be to become a part of it.

Now the idea of striving to be a member of God's kingdom was far from new in Jesus' day. The religious leaders such as the Pharisees worked hard to gain God's favour on judgement day, called the Day of the Lord. The Pharisees were not wrong in this ambition, but Jesus tells them the way they approached the task was misguided. Their methodology was to try to live by a mass of rules, huge lists of dos and don'ts. This, they hoped, would bring them God's favour.

Jesus explains in narrative parables what the real Kingdom of God is like. The stories use picture language and metaphor. Now, we must be careful with this, for it is easy to read an over-elaborate meaning into a parable. However, our reflection on Jesus' parables, to tease out their meaning for us is precisely what Jesus is hoping for when he used them.

If we look at that old favourite, the parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-9,18-23), we can pose many different thoughts on what the seed and the various soil conditions represent. Matthew's Gospel includes one explanation of the parable meaning (vv18-23) that many scholars think was not actually said by Jesus but was added in later by the early church. So, the parable is open to fresh interpretation.

We could see the nature of the different soils as applying to different times in our life. We all have days when our ability to take on board God's word is totally trodden down. We can be hardened by illness, bereavement, or anger and God doesn't get a look in. There are also days when our initial enthusiasm for prayer or Bible Study or a church project wanes, and our keenness dries up.

Competing demands for our time and talent can choke out progress on our faith journey. And yet, the sower constantly provides more seed for us, enabling us to find the right time to worship, to pray, to serve, to be fruitful.

It's good to note that in Jesus's parable most of the seed falls on unproductive soil. Notwithstanding this we end with an unexpectedly abundant harvest.

The message for us today is that the gift of the great harvest awaits. The Kingdom of Heaven comes in power, and our witness and discipleship which is often fragile in this world will be magnified by the

generosity of God into a fruitful, extravagant, and altogether gracious yield.

Your life story as a Christian is a parable. You are called to be the Sower and throw grace and love around like there is no tomorrow, precisely because there is a tomorrow, and it belongs to God.

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

Let us pray for our world; for the worldwide effort to create a vaccine for Covid-19. For all the peoples of the world and for cooperation as we continue to live with this virus. We think today of the people of Mongolia, for the young growing church and those seeking to help others.

As we pray for our world we pray especially for those in government and industry whose decisions effect the lives of so many. And we pray for wisdom for those in power.

We pray for our own land. For the NHS and for all those involved in social care and all keyworkers, giving thanks for the work they do for us. We pray for local communities as we continue to move towards what has been called the new normal and we think of all those involved with the Voluntary Care project.

We pray for the whole Church throughout the world, especially churches in countries with unsympathetic regimes. We pray for the Methodist Church, both at the local level, today we pray especially for Teddington Church and also the Connexional Team.

We take a time of quiet to remember those who have died, especially those who have been important to us on our own journeys of life and faith.

We make all our prayers in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: STF 415 The Church of Christ in every age.

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=3vTdkbuFKGA>

Listen

The Church of Christ, in every age
beset by change but Spirit-led,
must claim and test its heritage
and keep on rising from the dead.

Across the world, across the street,
the victims of injustice cry
for shelter and for bread to eat,

and never live until they die.

Then let the servant Church arise,
a caring Church that longs to be
a partner in Christ's sacrifice,
and clothed in Christ's humanity.

For he alone, whose blood was shed,
can cure the fever in our blood,
and teach us how to share our bread
and feed the starving multitude.

We have no mission but to serve
in full obedience to our Lord:
to care for all, without reserve,
and spread his liberating Word.

Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)

A prayer of blessing

Dear Lord.

When times are hard, walk beside us.

When we are unsure of which way to turn, dwell
within us.

When we need to listen to others, encourage us.

When our lives and work bear fruit, rejoice with us.

So may the blessing of God who is Father, Son, and
Holy Spirit be with us all today and forever more.

Amen.

Original Materials by Rev E Adam Wells

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