

Teddington Circuit Worship at Home Sheets

Sunday 23rd August 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 Nick White, Hazel Greasby and the Connexional team.

Opening Prayer

When we see only trouble **Jesus, be our vision**
When we feel only uncertainty **Jesus, be our rock**
When we hear only bad news **Jesus, be our hope**
In all the circumstances of our lives
Jesus, our Companion, be a light to our path

Hymn: One more step along the world I go (StF 476)

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/hymns/one-more-step-along-the-world-i-go-stf-476/>

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words:

One more step along the world I go,
one more step along the world I go;
from the old things to the new
keep me travelling along with you:
and it's from the old I travel to the new;
keep me travelling along with you.

Round the corners of the world I turn,
more and more about the world I learn;
all the new things that I see
you'll be looking at along with me:

As I travel through the bad and good,
keep me travelling the way I should;
where I see no way to go
you'll be telling me the way, I know:

Give me courage when the world is rough,
keep me loving though the world is tough;
leap and sing in all I do,
keep me travelling along with you:

You are older than the world can be,
you are younger than the life in me;
ever old and ever new,
keep me travelling along with you:

Sydney Carter (1915-2004)

Let us pray together

Gracious God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, mindful, compassionate, constant, thank you for loving us through every season of our lives. May we believe that you call us into a new day, that you call each of us by our name, that we belong to you. And gathered or scattered, you hold us together in love.

Generous and merciful God, the only way to come to you each day is in truth, for you know us completely and love us as we are. Shine your gentle light on us so that we can know ourselves to be real, honest and forgiven. Thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.

Today's Reading from the Old Testament

Hebrews 6:13-18

Today's Gospel Reading:

Matthew 16:13-16

Time to Reflect

In the lectionary passage from Matthew we read of Peter's declaration of who he believed Jesus to be.

Perhaps we should consider how we might answer that question ourselves. How would we answer a person who asked us who Jesus was (is)? And how does our answer affect how we live our lives?

The passage from Hebrews reminds us that God is faithful. We can rely upon Him absolutely.

And this quality of faithfulness is one of the foundations of our view of who Jesus is.

There are at least three characteristics of God's faithfulness, which should encourage us.

Firstly, God is faithful because He fulfils His promises

There is a Geyser in Yellowstone Park called "Old Faithful". Tourists come from all over the world to see this spout of water burst out of the ground. It erupts every 1-2 hours, so you need to be patient, but you can rely on an eruption. If a travel agent sells you a holiday including a trip to Wyoming to see Old Faithful, he can confidently promise you that if you wait for 1-2 hours you will see it erupt. God is like that. He is absolutely reliable. He does what He promises, faithfully. But, like the Geyser, you may have to wait longer than you hoped for the promise to be fulfilled.

Hebrews says, "*Abraham waited patiently, and he received what God had promised*". Actually, he lost patience for a while and tried to engineer his own solution, but God made him wait. Eventually when Abraham was 99 years old, but God fulfilled His promise with the birth of Isaac.

And why did He fulfil His promise? Because Abraham was faithful to God. Because He believed God.

The writer says, "*Instead, you will follow the example of those who are going to inherit God's promises because of their faith and endurance*". We inherit God's promise by our faith, our endurance, our belief in God. He believes in us when we believe in Him – it's an important part of the process.

Romans 1:17 says "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'" Karl Barth interprets the phrase "from faith to faith" as meaning "Salvation is accomplished through God's faithfulness, which comes first, and our faith in response to that".

When people swear on the Bible and promise to tell, "The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth", they are seeking to emphasise that they intend to fulfil that promise. "So help me God."

When a couple marry in church and make vows, they seek God to witness that they will be faithful.

This seeks the transfer of God's faithfulness to us to help us to be faithful.

God always does what He promises us, and we should always do what we promise God we will do.

So firstly, being faithful, means fulfilling promises. And God is faithful.

Secondly, God is faithful, because He is there whenever we need Him

Older folk may remember the Lone Ranger and Tonto. They will also recall the credits were played over Rossini's William Tell overture. The voice over included the phrase, "The Lone Ranger, with his faithful Indian companion Tonto." Why was Tonto faithful? Because when the Lone Ranger was in trouble, you knew that Tonto would be right there beside him to help whenever he was in trouble.

God is like that. He is our faithful companion at all times and in all places. As the old hymn goes,

Through all the changing scenes of life, in trouble and in joy, the praises of my God shall still my heart and tongue employ. When in distress, to Him I called, He to my rescue came". He is with us always.

That is being faithful. And that is exactly what God is with us. He is our faithful companion.

I expect we all have people we can rely upon when things get tough. Family members, neighbours, colleagues. Whatever mess we've got ourselves into, they'll be there for us, come what may.

Being with someone regardless of the circumstance, being non-judgemental, being supportive,

And likewise, there are people in our lives who we would drop everything to help. We'd be there.

God is our faithful companion. He is right there beside us whenever we need Him.

Second, being faithful is being ready to step in and help when needed. And God is faithful.

Thirdly, God never deserts us even in death

At Shibuya Station in Japan, sits a bronze statue of a dog called Hachiko, who used to wait at the station to meet his master on return from the office. One day, the master died in the office suddenly. But for another ten years, Hachiko made the same journey to the station daily to await his master.

His faithfulness continued even after death. 2,500 people hustle and bustle across the road to the station every day past the statue. Hachiko is immortalised as a symbol of Japanese faithfulness.

God is like that. He is waiting to greet us each day, whatever our day has been like. Like the father of the prodigal son, He waits to greet us whatever scrapes we've been in. And He'll be there waiting for us even in death. That is the extent of His faithfulness. It never tires, never wearies, never gives up.

Those we have loved, and who we've mourned as they have passed out of our sight beyond death, remain in our memories for ever. We treasure our times with them. We remain faithful to them.

Could we ever doubt that God would be faithful to us, not just to the point of death, but beyond?

God never deserts us even in death. He is right there with us come what may. Let us believe that.

Thirdly, being faithful is being there even to the point of death and beyond. God is faithful.

So faithfulness is about keeping promises, being there when needed, and remaining true to someone in life and in death regardless of the circumstances.

God is faithful to us, and He gives us faithfulness through the Holy Spirit. Our faith in Jesus.

So, let us be faithful to one another, and to God - it's hard to have one without the other!

Amen

In November, we moved house. It set me thinking how old and new need to exist together. A different house, same old furniture; meeting new people, keeping old friends. Old and new together enrich our lives. And it happens all around us in different ways.

Grandparents and grandchildren bridge the generation gap. In nature in autumn and winter, already buds are on the seemingly bare branches, nurturing life for another spring. In our north east culture, ancient Celtic sites co-exist with new developments. St Peter's Church by the River Wear bears witness to many centuries of Christian life, now surrounded by a modern university. But I suspect the Venerable Bede would have welcomed new ways of learning, exploring, discovering.

What does Jesus say about this? Many are tempted to think Jesus discarded all that was old giving us licence to do the same. Yes, we have his words about new wine and old wineskins that destroy one another when they are put together. But in the wilderness, whenever Jesus was tempted away from love and vulnerability, he found his resistance in words from the scriptures with their timeless wisdom and relevance.

Jesus held within himself the wisdom of the ages, God the Ancient of Days, 'the rock from which we were hewn' with the effortless ease he had of living with his contemporaries in fresh and creatively new ways.

During lockdown, we have learned of necessity to hold familiar songs and prayers with new ways of experiencing and expressing them. To be able to hold old and new is something we need to take into an uncertain future, as we abide in the timelessness of God, 'ever old and ever new' but allowing Jesus continuously to bring new life to birth in us, bubbling up with laughter, love and possibility.

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

Holy and gracious God, we pray for others, prayers that bring to mind the world's realities. Please teach us not to be afraid, because it is here we find you, sharing this deeply troubled world with us.

Please bless all who are continuing to make a difference: scientists working faster than ever before to find cure or vaccine for covid-19; chefs, volunteers, entertainers, neighbours and countless more. **May they know your laughter and love.**

We ask you to bless all who are there to care for those who are at their lowest, especially in health and care services. **May they know your persevering strength.**

We pray for the hundreds of thousands who are grieving here and across the world: for the loss of loved ones, loss of livelihood, loss of confidence and hope, loss of any sense of wellbeing. **May they know your comfort, strong and everlasting.**

We pray for people who need the world to be a more just and equal place, and for those who have power to make changes. May it happen quickly and peacefully. **May they know your righteousness.**

We pray for all who need the world to remember them: refugees and asylum seekers, all living in poverty and suffering from climate change. **May we remember; may they know your provision through us.**

Thank you for all, profoundly known and loved, who enrich our lives every day.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: God to enfold you (StF 648)

Can be sung to 'Morning has broken'

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/hymns/god-to-enfold-you-stf-648/>

God to enfold you,
Christ to uphold you,
Spirit to keep you in heaven's sight;
so may God grace you,
heal and embrace you,
lead you through darkness
into the light.

John L. Bell (b. 1949)

A prayer of blessing

Father, as we walk together towards you,
Keep our eyes on Jesus as he walks ahead;
And, sharing that right,
May we come closer to one another,
May we hold and support one another,
May we trust and be glad of one another;
Until at last we come home to you
In his strength, and his Holy Spirit.

Amen

Rowan Willaims

OtherOriginal Materials by Jean Hudson
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