

Teddington Circuit Worship at Home Sheets

Sunday 11 October 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 and the Connexional team for their contributions.

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, we come into your presence with thanksgiving, to praise your holy name. We lift your name on high and proclaim your greatness. We give thanks to the Lord for He is good and His love endures for ever.

Hymn: 36 There's a quiet understanding

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BqJ-JY3-nfU>

There's a quiet understanding
when we're gathered in the Spirit,
it's a promise that he gives us,
when we gather in his name.
There's a love we feel in Jesus,
there's a manna that he feeds us,
it's a promise that he gives us,
when we gather in his name.

And we know when we're together,
sharing love and understanding,
that our brothers and our sisters
feel the oneness that he brings.
Thank you, thank you, thank you, Jesus,
for the way you love and feed us,
for the many ways you lead us;
thank you, thank you, Lord;
thank you, thank you, Lord.

Tedd Smith (b. 1927)

Let us pray together

Father God, creator of the world and universe, look down upon us as we gather in your name. Although we may be worshipping in different places we pray that we shall be strengthened through your Word and the unity we have in Jesus Christ. We are not alone in our worship and add our praises to all who meet in the name of Jesus today. Creation speaks of your love and we are blessed with many gifts. Sadly, we have abused those gifts and have not always acted in ways that are pleasing to you. Have mercy upon us O' Lord, and show us how we can make your world a better place in which to live. May your blessing be with us today and every day; for we ask this in Jesus' name.

Today's Reading from the Old Testament Psalm 106 v 1-5

Today's Gospel Reading : Matthew 22:1-14

Time to Reflect

As the Pandemic continues, we are painfully aware of the tension at the heart of the Government's Coronavirus regulations. It's a balance between lives and livelihood. The health of the nation versus the national economy.

Of course, we are used to tensions in our lives. The daily struggle between what we want to do and what we can find time for; or between what we would like to buy and what we can afford.

There's a tension also for many Christians in their faith. It's between judgement and love; or put another way between the idea that God's Grace and love is freely given and the need for obedience to God's word.

This tension often shows in how folk approach their Bible reading. If you ask what someone's favourite parable is, then expect the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son to be high up the list. Yet parables that deal with judgement are often skipped or dodged.

Towards the end of Matthew's Gospel, we find the striking and troubling story of the Wedding Banquet for the King's Son (Matthew 22:1-14).

Blood and gore drip from the parable just as it does from the parable of the tenants of the vineyard. So, it is not surprising that people prefer the Luke version of the parable (Luke 14:15-24).

One particular aspect of the story that offends our modern sense of fairness is when one of the guests at the Wedding turns up in the wrong clothes. The guest gets tied up and thrown into a dark place of wailing and grinding teeth. Oh dear!

There appears to be a stark tension between inclusive grace with its lifestyle of love and forgiveness with a harsh demand for obedience and a penalty for refusal.

However, if we dig a little deeper into Matthew's version of the parable, we find that parts of it don't really work. In verse 9 while the dinner is waiting the King wages war, destroys cities and kills those who dishonoured and rebelled against him.

Matthew, the Gospel writer, is employing a shocking worldly story in a symbolic way. Take the invited guests who do finally make the Wedding banquet. Where do they get their costumes, when one of them doesn't? Unless the King provides the wardrobe. You see, this is not about clothes at all.

The early Christians pictured conversion as donning a new set of clothes. A way of putting on a Christian identity.

This is the answer to the apparent tension in the story. If we want to be at the heavenly banquet with God - we must be clothed in Christ. What God is saying to all of us is "Be clothed in Christ; live your life to his will, be blessed, be loved, be fruitful".

The Apostle Paul picks up this idea in his letter to the Colossians when he writes, "God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience".....above all "clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony".

You see, it's our choice, it's our judgement call. As Christians all our values, all our actions, all our desires become empowered by the Holy Spirit. The very spirit of Jesus within us.

Yes, even when we get things wrong, which we all do, the Holy Spirit will enable us to ask for forgiveness and for us to remain clothed in Christ.

God has sacrificed himself for us. He has lifted the burden of judgement. We do not have to earn his love and salvation by our own endeavours. It has been given freely.

There is also no tension in wanting others to notice the faith clothes we are wearing. Our identity in Christ is not about boasting, not about us thinking that we are good, but is making the bold statement that we are loved, and we want others to be loved also.

A time of prayer

God of love and compassion; we lay our broken world at your feet. Our world continues to be torn apart by war, fear and hate and people are oppressed by those

who seek power for themselves with little thought for the needs of others.

We think for our towns and communities, many of which are fragmented and divided. Diversity can bring richness and strength to our communities, but can be used to promote fear and hatred. Show us how old pains and wounds can be used to bring new life and hope.

We think of those whose lives have been broken, through sorrow and grief, illness, and fractured relationships. Life may seem to have lost its purpose. May the gift of your healing grace bring a new sense of purpose and love.

On this Homeless and Prison Sunday we think of those who have found themselves homeless and destitute not knowing where to turn. We remember those who have committed crimes, and are in prison or just been released. As we recognise the need for justice may we act with compassion and mercy, remembering how God deals with us.

We draw our prayers of intercession to a close by saying aloud or in our mind these words:

Almighty God, give us hearts of compassion so that we can bless those whom we meet. Help us to bring peace and comfort to those who are in distress. May your Spirit give us life and strength and show us how we can share God's love, joy and peace and be true servants of Christ. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to <https://youtu.be/RYMjqc5I9G4> or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

A prayer of blessing

May your grace, love and peace, inspire and strengthen us now, and in the days to come. In Jesus' name we ask this. Amen.

Original Materials by John Roughley

All

Hymns reproduced under CCLI 1144191.

Local Churches please insert CCLI No here

Psalm 106 v 1-5

¹ Praise the LORD!

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures for ever.

² Who can utter the mighty doings of the LORD,
or declare all his praise?

³ Happy are those who observe justice,
who do righteousness at all times.

⁴ Remember me, O LORD, when you show favour to
your people;

help me when you deliver them;

⁵ that I may see the prosperity of your chosen ones,
that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation,
that I may glory in your heritage.

Philippians 4 v1-9

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.

Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.