

Teddington Circuit Worship Sheets

Sunday 7 February 2021

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Call to Worship

The Lord heals the broken-hearted,
and binds up their wounds.
The Lord determines the number of the stars;
he gives to all of them their names.
Great is our Lord, and abundant in power.
(Psalm 147 vv3-5)

Hymn: 726 Come to us creative spirit

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

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

Come to us, creative Spirit,
in our Father's house,
every natural talent foster,
hidden skills arouse,
that within your earthly temple
wise and simple
may rejoice.

Poet, painter, music-maker,
all your treasures bring;
artist, actor, graceful dancer,
make your offering;
join your hands in celebration!
Let creation
shout and sing!

Word from God eternal springing,
fill our minds, we pray,
and in all artistic vision
give integrity.
May the flame, within us burning,
kindle yearning
day by day.

In all places and for ever
glory be expressed
to the Son, with God the Father,
and the Spirit blest.
In our worship and our living,
keep us striving
towards the best.

David Mowbray (b. 1938)

Let us pray together

Creator God, we marvel at all that you have made, from vast galaxies to tiny flowers, from mountains and forests to the delicacy of a spider's web. We marvel too that in your generosity you have given us the gift of creativity, we weave new materials out of old bottles and tyres, we find new ways to tell your age-old story of redemption and we learn new ways to heal and prevent disease.

Lord you were continually under pressure. There were people everywhere seeking you. Following you. Asking you questions. Wanting your attention. Yet you didn't complain.

We're sorry, Lord, that at times life's demands cause us to stumble, to lose patience. At times, we confess we give in to the pressure. Help us to be more like you, Lord. We're sorry for not getting our priorities right sometimes. Help us to know, as you did, the importance of spending time with you and drawing refreshment from the Father. We're sorry for allowing other things to take over and squeeze out our time with you. Help us to draw daily on your strength, in order to cope with whatever our day holds.

Heavenly Father, we know because of your love, you came to set us free from sin's guilt.

Thank you that we can receive the assurance of total forgiveness through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

Today's Gospel Reading: Mark 1 vv 29-39

Time to Reflect

The First 100 Days: What are our Priorities?

When we finally return to some sort of normality (which we pray will come at some point), will we have a different outlook on life and on what our priorities should be? Should we? Those in positions of authority in Government will no doubt be faced with such questions. Has the experience of the pandemic caused us to re-evaluate what is really important? No doubt most people now realise just how important our

friends and family links are. What should be done in the first 100 days, or in whatever number we deem appropriate?

Balancing priorities when making decisions in life can be difficult, even at the best of times. Whether it is trying to achieve the right work-life balance, as the commentators call it, Or making the family budget stretch to cover essentials, and provide for some extras, Or deciding which things on the eternal "To do list" will just have to wait a bit longer.

Some say you should classify them into urgent/non-urgent and important/not important. Then having put them into the four categories, just do the urgent/important quadrant.

But perhaps the experience of this past year suggests we use a different approach. We can't magically do all the highest priority things at once, or even at all sometimes. We wish we could wave a magic wand and find a solution, so everything can get done. But we can't have it both ways, or even either way, for time marches on at its own pace.

The world's challenges and priorities seem irreconcilable too. Reduce debt or save life? So politicians seek to do what is most popular, based on the principles of democracy. But this sets the minority against the majority, as they seek to defend their human rights. Or they respond to the demands of a minority, and find the majority dissatisfied. Countries overthrow a leader to achieve freedom, but then engage in internal fighting.

So can conflicting priorities ever be resolved to everyone's satisfaction? Probably not. The situation is sadly often resolved by he who shouts the loudest and longest winning.

In this context, it's not a bad idea to consider what we might learn from Jesus' approach. How did His priorities influence how He spent His time on the urgent and the important?

Solomon concluded that there is a right time for all things, even for opposites. We shouldn't expect to be always sad or always happy, always healthy or always ill. We shouldn't expect to always win or always lose. They say, "Variety is the spice of life." We shouldn't always be starting things or stopping things, or always changing things.

In the context of what we try to achieve in our lives, and the priority decisions we make, in the ups and downs of life, few if any of these are actually

important in the sight of God. We can beat ourselves up about bad decisions, missed opportunities, simple mistakes. But we can't turn the clock back. We can make amends sometimes, we can apologise, we can be assured of the forgiveness of God, even if not the forgiveness of other people.

But when we finally meet God at the end of our earthly lives, what will matter to Him? The transient events, which seemed so important to us, will be of no significance to Him. What will really matter to Him is our developing relationship with Him, our faith in Him, and how we share His love with others around us, so that they too may know Him.

Let us consider for a moment a more specific and illustrative incident in Jesus' ministry. Imagine that you were Jairus, and that your daughter is seriously ill - at death's door. The doctors can do nothing. There seems no hope. Then you hear Jesus is in the area. He apparently has a gift of healing people. You don't know how, perhaps miraculously. You are one of the synagogue rulers, so naturally you assume He will give you priority. And so you go to find Him, to plead with Him, to come and heal your daughter - right now!

Initially all goes well, Jesus listens to your pleading, and agrees to come home with you. But as He walks through the crowds on the way back to your house, something happens. Some woman, who is known to have been ill for years, manages to touch his cloak. This shouldn't be a problem. She doesn't even speak to Him to delay His progress.

But instead of continuing on His way to your house, He stops and asks what happened. Doesn't He know your need is more urgent, that you are more important than this woman? Imagine how you must feel. What does it matter who touched your cloak? Hurry up!

At least the disciples seem to be sympathetic to your cause as well. They say to Jesus, "How can we know who it was, with such a large crowd?" But He pursues the point. Finally the woman confesses it was her, and Jesus says her faith has made her well.

Now at last Jesus can continue His journey to your house to see your daughter. Great! But it's too late. At that moment, someone from your house comes with the bad news. Your daughter is dead. You think, "If only He hadn't been delayed by that woman!" But Jesus says to you, "Don't despair, all is not lost, I will come into your house anyway." By now, you might be harbouring resentment that Jesus has got His

priorities wrong. But Jesus proceeds to the room where your daughter is, and with a word of command, He raises her from her sleep of death, and restores her to you. Why did you doubt?

The story is a vivid illustration of how Jesus works - in His time, at His pace, not ours. Jesus has time for everyone, and He responds to our calling when the time is right. Perhaps we have situations in our life at the moment, which are testing our patience. Perhaps we have issues we feel we've told God about, prayed about, and waited for. But it seems that nothing is happening, and we feel that God has forgotten about us.

There's time for everything in Jesus' world, just as Solomon wrote. He created time. He had time to stop and find the woman who had touched his cloak to speak to her. And yet He still had time to deal with what Jairus might have thought was more urgent. Martha and Mary experienced the same doubts when their brother Lazarus died. But Jesus didn't let them down. Like Jairus' daughter, He raised Lazarus from death. When Jesus was asleep in the boat on the lake, His disciples lost patience with Him, but He was there when they needed Him, and used His power in His time to save them.

Jesus had time for people, for all who needed Him. And He had patience with them. He was prepared to speak to anyone - the Samaritan woman at the well, Nicodemus, Zacchaeus the thieving tax collector perched in the sycamore tree, doubting Thomas, Peter by the shore after his resurrection, even though Peter had denied Him three times.

This leads us to reconsider our own lives and how we manage our own priorities. What help can we seek, to resolve the unresolvable conflicts of our priorities and time? When there just aren't enough hours in the day, or money for everything that's needed. do we allow impatience to dominate our behaviour? Do we do the urgent and important? Or do we do what we think people expect of us, or what we like doing, or what is easiest?

In this enforced period of reflection, let's review our priorities when we can't do everything. Have we considered how we might involve God more in reconciling the irreconcilable? How do we use God's power? How much do we think we must do all by ourselves? When we look back on our lives and how we have spent our time, will we have regrets? Will we feel we should have spent more time doing some things, and less doing others? They say no-one's dying

words are ever, "I wish I had spent more time at the office". Perhaps we shouldn't wait until then to review how we use the one finite resource - time.

Our calling from Jesus requires us to align our lives more closely with His priorities. No doubt we are all willing to make sacrifices to help out our loved ones in time of need. But there are others further afield, who we don't even know, who are also His priorities. Sharing our faith with others is a priority for Jesus. "Go into all the world and make all people my disciples". How much time are we spending on that, and with what priority?

God enables us to call on His power to help us doing what is His priority. We can pray. That was a priority for Jesus too. In the reading He went to a solitary place to pray. People were Jesus' priority. That's what or who He spent His time on. They came first. Whether it was a woman with bleeding when He was on an urgent mission to heal a girl. or a tax collector desperate to meet Him, whose life would be changed in an afternoon, or a Samaritan woman at a well, needing far more than drinking water, or Nicodemus.

And people should be our priority too. Even when we may be tempted to impatience, because they are delaying us doing something else, which we had already planned. Even when we're listening to someone, but actually just hoping they would stop talking.

Jesus says, "Be flexible. Be alert to others needs, and respond to them with my power, and I will help you sort out the consequences of changing your plans to meet a need". It requires sacrifice. We will feel it as we give others our time, like Jesus felt His power go. So let's use His power in our lives so that He and others take priority over ourselves.

What's top of our To Do list? "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind." And second on the list is, "Love your neighbour as yourself". Let's pray that this To Do list of only two items, is one which we can tick off every day.

Amen.

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

Loving God, we pray for the community and country of which we are a part. For those who are exhausted with caring for others and long for a break. For those who have had enough of restrictions, of not being able to

meet with friends and family, and feel they cannot stand it any longer, and for those who are angry and frightened, who feel their only hope is just to try and hang on until things get better.

Loving God, we pray for the leaders of the world, as they try and bring the pandemic under control.
Give them the wisdom and courage to respect every human life and seek freedom, justice and peace for all people.

Loving God we pray for the church, unite us by your Spirit, and enable us to witness to the hope we have in you.

Loving God, we especially pray today for Teddington Church, the Voluntary Care group project, Lancashire and Bristol Districts and for the country of Portugal.

Loving God, come to us now, as you have come to your people in every age. We thank you for all who have reflected the light of Christ. Help us to follow their example and bring us with them to live for ever in your kingdom. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to Seek ye first the kingdom of God
(StF254)

Or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

<https://youtu.be/4C-flDs33Dg>

Seek ye first the kingdom of God,
and his righteousness,
and all these things shall be added unto you;

Allelu-, alleluia:
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia,
allelu-, alleluia!

Ask, and it shall be given unto you;
seek and ye shall find;
knock, and the door shall be opened unto to you;

Allelu-, alleluia:
We shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word
that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord;
Allelu-, alleluia:

Karen Lafferty (b. 1948)

May God, the giver of hope, fill us with all joy and peace because we trust in him, and the blessing of God Father, Son and Holy spirit be with us all. Amen

Original Materials by Jean Ware

All

Hymns reproduced under CCLI 1144191.

Local Churches please insert CCLI No here

We are grateful to all the Ministers and Local Preachers from around the Connexion who have contributed to Worship at Home. This resource is administrated by Ministries: Vocations and Worship in the Connexional Team. We aim to continue to provide these resources until the end of August 2021.

A prayer of blessing