



Birstall & Rothley Methodist Churches



October 18th, 2020

This act of worship has been prepared for use both at home and in the church.



Call to worship

Praise the Lord!
How good it is to sing praises to our God;
for he is gracious,
and a song of praise is fitting.

Prayer of approach: Psalm 99 (STF 821)

The Lord is king:

Let the peoples tremble!

He sits enthroned upon the cherubim;

Let the earth quake!

The Lord is great in Zion:

He is exalted over all the peoples.

Let them praise your great and awesome name.

Holy is he!

Mighty King, lover of justice,
you have established equity;

You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.

Extol the Lord our God;

worship at his footstool.

Holy is he!

Moses and Aaron were among his priests,
Samuel also was among those who called on his name.

They cried to the Lord, and he answered them.

He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud;

They kept his decrees, and the statutes that he gave them.

O Lord our God, you answered them;
you were a forgiving God to them,
but an avenger for their wrongdoings.

***Extol the Lord our God,
and worship at his holy mountain;
for the Lord our God is holy.
Amen.***

Hymn STF 79:

I'll praise my maker while I've breath,
and when my voice is lost in death,
praise shall employ my nobler powers;
my days of praise shall ne'er be past
while life and thought and being last
or immortality endures.

Happy are those whose hopes rely
on Israel's God! He made the sky,
and earth, and sea, with all their train:
his truth for ever stands secure,
he saves the oppressed, he feeds the poor,
and none shall find his promise vain.

The Lord pours eyesight on the blind,
the Lord supports the fainting mind,
he sends the labouring conscience peace;
he helps the stranger in distress,
the widow and the fatherless,
and grants the prisoner glad release.

I'll praise him while he lends me breath,
and when my voice is lost in death
praise shall employ my noblest powers;
my days of praise shall ne'er be past,
while life and thought and being last
or immortality endures.

Words: Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Prayer of adoration

We worship you, O Lord God,
and give thanks for your great glory and power,
which you show to your servants
in your wonderful world.

All the things which we enjoy are from your mighty hand,
and you alone are to be praised
for all the blessings of the life that now is.

Make us thankful to you for all your mercies
and more ready to serve you with all our heart;
for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Amen

Prayer of confession

Holy Lord,
You do not allow any gods before you,
Yet we create idols upon which we place our hopes.
You desire our total loving devotion to you,
Yet we seek out cosmetic beauty for which we express admiration.
You demand faithfulness and obedience,
But we put our trust in physical might and strength,
We consider disobedience an appropriate way to fight for freedom and liberty.

Holy Lord,
You desire that we should be content with our lot in life,
Yet we make demands and strive each day for more possessions.
You call us to live in peace with one another,
Yet we fight to cling and grasp onto our food and property,
In greed and selfishness we seek to live in comfort.
You are concerned for truth and justice,
But we deceive ourselves looking favourably on our own motives,
And we make prejudiced judgement against others.

Holy Lord,
You seek the humble hearts of the righteous,
Yet we enjoy acclaim for our achievements and those of our families.
We are filled with pride with the riches we have received.
We lack the goodness, mercy and purity which lead to true righteousness.
In our thoughts, words and deeds we have failed to keep your commands.
In our treatment of others,
In our lack of endurance and perseverance in prayer.

Holy Lord,
We confess our sins to you trusting in your mercy.
We humble ourselves with contrite, penitent hearts.
We place our hope in your compassion.

Create within us clean hearts.
Forgive our sins and restore us to a right relationship.

silence

God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world,
But to save the world through him.

Hear then the gracious word of Jesus Christ:
'Your sins are forgiven.'

Amen.

We say together the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father

Hymn STF 449:

Lord of creation, to you be all praise!
Most mighty your working, most wondrous your ways!
Your glory and might are beyond us to tell,
and yet in the heart of the humble you dwell.

Lord of all power, I give you my will,
in joyful obedience your tasks to fulfill.
Your bondage is freedom, your service is song,
and, held in your keeping, my weakness is strong.

Lord of all wisdom, I give you my mind;
rich truth that surpasses my knowledge to find;
what eye has not seen and what ear has not heard
is taught by your Spirit and shines from your Word.

Lord of all bounty, I give you my heart;
I praise and adore you for all you impart:
your love to inspire me, your counsel to guide,
your presence to shield me, whatever betide.

Lord of all being, I give you my all,
if I should disown you, I stumble and fall;
but led in your service your word to obey,
I'll walk in your freedom to the end of the way.

Words: Jack Copley Winslow (1882-1974)

Readings: Exodus 33: 12 – 23

Moses said to the Lord, "See, you have said to me, 'Bring up this people'; but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favour in my sight.' Now if I have found favour in your sight, show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favour in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people."

The Lord said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

And Moses said, "If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favour in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth."

The Lord said to Moses, "I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favour in my sight, and I know you by name."

Moses said, "Show me your glory, I pray."

And the Lord said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The Lord'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," he said, "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live."

And the Lord continued, "See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen."

Matthew 22: 15 - 22

Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?"

But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax."

And they brought him a denarius.

Then he said to them, “Whose head is this, and whose title?”

They answered, “The emperor’s.”

Then he said to them, “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

Prayer

Almighty God, you created the heavens and the earth
and formed us in your own image.

Teach us to discern your hand in all your works
and to serve you with reverence and thanksgiving

through Jesus Christ our Lord

who reigns, with you and the Holy Spirit,

supreme over all creation,

now and for ever.

Amen.

Reflection

The readings today both have something to say about God’s image. Moses can’t look at God – such dazzling holiness is more than a mere human being can bear, we are told. But because he was such an exceptional person, Moses was permitted a glimpse of glory as it faded after God had passed by. More remarkably, Moses would hear God’s true name. God’s identity was revealed in two ways, so that Moses would know who God truly is.

Many generations later, Jesus came as the living image of God, so that all people might see and understand the true nature of God. Jesus was completely human, so we can truly understand that human beings really are made in the image of God.

And because we are in God’s image, we are to act like God. Not like *gods*, who lord their authority over others for self-gain, but rather like *God* – the One who creates and sustains and nurtures and redeems and saves...no matter what the cost.

As creatures made in the image of God, we are to be God’s agents; God partners and co-workers. Sharing God’s work in the world, not as an act of power but rather as an act of stewardship, ensuring that all share the abundant life that God wishes for us all.

In today’s gospel reading, Jesus called his enemies hypocrites – literally people who wear a false face, who pretend to be someone else. Perhaps they have been doing this for so long that they forgotten who they really are; people who bear the image and likeness of God (as the coin bore the likeness of the Emperor).

We must never forget that we are God’s children and stewards, made in the likeness of God and charged to act like the God we see in Jesus.

How we do this in our daily life, in our decisions and actions, is rarely easy. And we will disagree about how it should be done. But remember that God is love, and whilst we are governed by love (including love for those we disagree with), we won’t go far wrong.

*Take a moment to be quiet,
and reflect on the fact that you are made in God’s image.
What does that mean to you?*

Prayer of thanksgiving

Almighty God, Author of Life,
we thank you that by your Word
You created humankind in your image.
We thank you that by your breath
we have been filled with your Holy Spirit.
We thank you that by your love
the grace of Jesus Christ marks us with your seal.
We thank you that Jesus intercedes on our behalf
assuring us of our acceptance as your children.
Heavenly Father, for all your blessings to us,
Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Gracious and merciful Lord,
may your Church be united in your Son
our Saviour, Jesus Christ
whenever we come together
in our lives, in fellowship and in our worship.
May our minister and Circuit Superintendent Paula
receive encouragement, strength and support in her ministry,
sharing the gospel with joy, obedience and patience.
May our stewards, here and in the circuit,
be blessed with wisdom in assessing risk to keep our members safe.

Gracious and merciful Lord,
may our government, our politicians and councillors
work together in promoting aid, assistance and care
for those in our society who are in need.

May the taxes we contribute to their budgets
be used wisely and well.
May the weak receive protection,
the hungry receive food,
the homeless receive shelter.
May our authorities work together to promote justice and peace.

Gracious and merciful Lord,
may our educational institutions,
schools and universities teach eternal truths,
our health services provide comfort, hope and healing.
May we seek to follow the methods of keep clean,
distancing ourselves from danger.
May we continue to look after the vulnerable,
the orphan and the widow,
the isolated, the lonely.
May we bear the light of your presence,
and reflect your glory to all we meet.

Gracious and merciful Lord,
fill us with your Holy Spirit
that we may remain your faithful servants,
enduring and persevering with obedience
seeking to keep ourselves holy and righteous,

following the example of your saints in glory.

May we be blessed with a share of the inheritance of Jesus Christ
the gift of eternal life in your kingdom.

Amen.

Hymn STF 341

All for Jesus - all for Jesus,
this our song shall ever be;
for we have no hope, nor Saviour,
if we have not hope in thee.

All for Jesus - thou wilt give us
strength to serve thee, hour by hour,
none can move us from thy presence,
while we trust thy love and power.

All for Jesus - thou hast loved us;
all for Jesus - thou hast died;
all for Jesus - thou art with us;
all for Jesus crucified.

All for Jesus - all for Jesus –
this the Church's song must be;
till, at last, we all are gathered
one in love and one in thee.

Words: W.J. Sparrow-Simpson (1859-1952)

Blessing

Go with joy for the Lord is your strength
Go in peace for you have been redeemed by Jesus Christ,
Go with love to reflect the glory of God whose image you bear.

Amen.