



Birstall and Rothley Methodist Churches



Sunday 22 November 2020

This short act of worship has been prepared for use at home,
as we are unable to use Methodist Church premises.

Call to Worship: Psalm 100

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.

Know that the Lord is God.
he made us, and we are his;

***we are his people,
and the sheep of his pasture.***

Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him, bless his name.

***The Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures for ever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.***

Hymn: StF 51

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;
as Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be:

***Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided -
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!***

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love:

Great is Thy faithfulness!

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

***Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;***

*All I have needed Thy hand hath provided -
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

words: Thomas O Chisholm (1866-1960)

Prayer

Almighty God:
from the beginning of time
to the end of eternity,
you have chosen to use your power and majesty
to love us,
to redeem us,
and to shape us as your people.

King of Kings and Lord of Lords:
you became weak
so you could confront the strength of sin and death,
confounding their ridicule with your resurrection.

Spirit of God, resting upon us:
may your power enflame us with your peace;
may your peace touch us with your grace;
may your grace fill us with your hope;
may your hope lead us into your Kingdom.

God in Community, Holy Three in One,
may your word be on our lips,
as we pray in Jesus' Name.

Amen.

Lord, like a shepherd, you never stop searching for Your people.
Your care for us anticipates our need.
Before we could have known that we needed Your grace,
Jesus gave His life for our forgiveness.

We confess that we need Your forgiveness;
you are the shepherd and we are your flock,
but we admit the times we have tried to take control ourselves.

We admit that we have not always trusted your good news to be good for us,
and have pleaded with you to care for us,
when we mean that we want you to do as we say.

At the same time, we have held back from caring for others, and ignored their needs.
Lord, have mercy upon us, and forgive us, we pray.

Loving shepherd, teach us to follow you
in the days and places of the weeks ahead.
Through Jesus Christ we pray,

Amen.

Bible Readings: Matthew 25: 31-46

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?'

And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'

Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?'

Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Time to Reflect

Do you remember the child's toy spinning tops? I mean the ones that looked a bit like brightly painted spaceships - you pumped them up and down, and when you let them go they spun across the floor. They were no good on carpet, but on a hard floor they would whirl away. I remember my younger brother playing with one - it was bright red, with animals painted around it. When it began to spin, the animals blurred into a single bright stripe - you couldn't see the individual animals, never mind identify which was the lion, the tiger, or the elephant.

I get the same feeling about this story. At first glance, it seems easy to tell the sheep from the goats. But the more you think about it, the harder it gets. If I try to work out who is a sheep, and who is a goat, everything starts to become blurred. I don't even know which category I would fall into!

The people in the story didn't know which category they fall into, either - they didn't even seem to be aware that there are different categories. They were just getting on with their lives, then suddenly found that they were being split into different groups. I wonder if they realised what was going on, and that they were being sorted according to how they responded to seeing others in need.

Some people are hungry - thirsty - don't have adequate clothes to wear - how does that make you feel? That it must be their own fault for spending their money on the wrong things?

Some people are in prison. Do you think about them at all, or is it a case of "out of sight, out of mind"?

The people in the story were being divided according to how they responded to difficult and unsettling situations.

We can withdraw in fear and confusion.

Or we can respond in love and hope, opening our hearts and looking to God to show us the way.

Take a time to sit quietly

Prayer & Lord's Prayer

O God, our Heavenly Father,

give us a vision of our world as Your love would make it:

a world where the weak are protected
and none go hungry or poor;

a world where the benefits of civilised life are shared,
and everyone can enjoy them;

a world where different races, nations and cultures
live in tolerance and mutual respect,

a world where peace is built with justice,
and justice is guided by love;

and when we see this vision,
give us the inspiration and courage to build it,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

We pray for those who are hungry.

we pray harder for those who will not feed them.

We pray for those who struggle each week to pay their bills.

we pray harder for the wealthy who do not care.

We pray for those who are homeless.

we pray harder for those who deny them shelter.

We pray for the sick and lonely.

we pray harder for those who will not give them comfort.

We pray for those who cry out for dignity.

we pray harder for those who will not listen.

We pray for those oppressed by unjust wages.

we pray harder for those who exploit them.

We pray for those who bear the yoke of prejudice.

we pray harder for those who discriminate against them.

We pray for those whose basic needs are denied.

***we pray harder for public officials who cater to the greedy
and ignore those bound unjustly.***

Amen.

*written by Rebecca Sutton,
Program Coordinator of Global Women's Exchange.*

Our Father, who art in heaven ...

Hymn

StF 511

Speak in the stillness, God we pray,
come to our hearts and meet us here.

Bring us your peace for each new day
- the gift of grace to earth from heaven.

We speak as though we have not heard
and live as if we do not know
your love in Christ, the living Word
- the gift of grace to earth from heaven.

When, in the anxious rush of days,
we lose our hold on faith and you,
reclaim us with your calm embrace
- the gift of grace to earth from heaven.

Lift us to see with heavens eyes.
We long to soar on eagles wings
as we press on to claim your prize
- the gift of grace to earth from heaven.

So may we be renewed in love,
held and sustained by you alone.
Strengthened by you that we may prove
a gift of grace to earth from heaven. Amen.

words: Gareth Hill (b.1956)

Benediction

Loving God, we have known your presence.

We have lived in your love.

Show us your glory.

Reveal your glory in us.

We will carry your glory from here.

We will show it to all your children.

Amen.