

SUNDAY SERVICE GUIDE 26/04/2020

By Rev Martin Beukes

Prayer

God beyond time and space, as we gather together although we are apart. As we worship from our homes in different ways and even at different times, fill us with your grace. Fill our homes with your presence as we pray and sing and read the scripture together. May we know, not just your presence with us, but also the presence of your saints - every follower of Jesus who is and was and will be - worshipping with us by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Invitation to Reflection

Social Distance like a Wesley

Avoid all the people you can,
by all the means you can,
in all the ways you can,
in all the places you can,
at all the times you can,
as long as ever you can

I don't know how athletic you were at school. But my heart always broke for the last person picked for a team during PE. To be the child who was so bad at rounders, or netball, or football that they might as well not bring clothes to do PE in at all, because it is basically going to be another massive embarrassment in your young life. No-one likes being the odd one out, or the least important person in a crowd. That must be even worse, when your brother is the most famous person in their field that lived in the whole century, and you were basically his sidekick.

Today we worship slightly differently to what we normally do. We will be responding to the very wise words of one Rev David Jenkins who once described our Methodist uniqueness as us being a people who “sing our theology.” The Methodist Church in southern Africa, where I grew up and was trained as a minister, takes enormous pride in the fact that the Methodist movement was ‘born in song’. Many of the most famous African language hymns in the region were written by Methodist missionaries and their local guides and interpreters. So much so, that they are still recorded today by secular and gospel artists alike. Most of whom know nothing of the history.

Today we pay homage to the works of the “lesser spotted singing Wesley” (Say that in your best David Attenborough voice). Charles Wesley’s hymns contain something of a ‘Methodist creed’ and they teach us so much about our journey with Jesus. They tell us of what we believe, how we should behave, and what Jesus has done for, is doing in, and is doing through us. So, as we worship today we will delve into the message of the book of Romans, the lyrics of hymns written by Charles Wesley, and you are invited to listen out for what God is inviting you to, how you need to respond – whatever stage of your journey with Jesus we find yourself on. This is what the early church called The Way, the path we walk with Jesus, even when we walk unaware.

Confessions

God who has created us in love and invited us into your family, we have not always lived lives which bring glory to you, or even to ourselves. Through our own deliberate fault we have done things of which we are not proud; we have failed to love our neighbour as you have loved us; we have even failed to love ourselves in the way you would expect of us; we have cause hurt, caused hunger, caused illness by our turning a blind eye on the need of others; we have left undone the task which you have called us to. Forgive us.

Lord of love and power, you have overcome sin and death, choosing to suffer to show God’s great love for us. Many times, on the road, you spoke gracious words to sinners: “Your sins are forgiven!” May these words ring true in our ears this day. Jesus, visit us with your grace, create in us clean hearts which being open and receptive to God’s invitation, we might live as the physical presence of your gracious love in the world. Amen

All people need to be saved...

Read Romans 3:9-20

We like to think that we are doing okay as people. We try to live ethical lives and we help people in need. We do good things. In fact, the United Kingdom is one of the most generous charity giving nations in the world. A 99-year-old World War Two veteran, Captain Tom Moore, raised 25 million Pounds for the NHS by walking sponsored laps of his back yard the other day. That takes some generous giving. But is charity enough. Is doing good things enough. The passage we read puts it like this “there is no one that is righteous, not even one.” What we do cannot make us righteous, and yet we hold that God is at work in us, even before we are aware – always reaching out to us in love no matter how far away we are from God.

Hymn <https://youtu.be/VAOI2xwmYAw>

And can it be that I should gain
An int’rest in the Savior’s blood?

Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

*Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

He left His Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace!
Emptied Himself to show His love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race!
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me.
Refrain

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night.
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray:
I woke – the dungeon flamed with light!
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth and followed Thee.
Refrain

No condemnation now I dread:
Jesus, and all in Him is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th' eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.
Refrain

All people can be saved...

Read Romans 3:21-26

Less explanation required here; I think. We have "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" and everyone who calls on the name of Jesus is "justified freely by his grace!"

Hymn <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ztugxlfwP4c>

Christ the Lord is ris'n today, Alleluia!
Sons of men and angels say: Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, ye heav'ns, and earth reply: Alleluia!

Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!
Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!
Dying once, he all doth save, Alleluia!
Where thy victory, O grave? Alleluia!

Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids Him rise, Alleluia!
Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia!

Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!
Foll'wing our exalted Head, Alleluia!
Made like Him, like Him we rise, Alleluia!
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!

All people can know they are saved...

Read Romans 8:1-16

We live in a time where almost everything is uncertain. Of course, our current situations with lockdowns the world over to try and contain the pandemic creates its own uncertainty. But also, the way that many people's world views have developed over the last hundred years or so shuns any thought or possibility of certainty. But assurance and certainty are different things. To know that you are saved is not about certainty, that would be to take God's place in making decisions about forgiving us. And that sort of action would almost certainly mean we would not be forgiving a lot of people that God would be. Romans put it like this, "The Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." Assurance is holding on to that, you are God's beloved child.

Hymn <https://youtu.be/i289qFwVGKo>

O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of His grace!

Jesus, the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life, and health, and peace.

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood availed for me.

He speaks and, listening to His voice,
New life the dead receive,
The mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
The humble poor believe.

Hear Him, ye deaf; His praise, ye dumb,
Your loosened tongues employ;
Ye blind, behold your Saviour come;

And leap, ye lame, for joy.

My gracious Master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim,
To spread through all the earth abroad,
The honours of Thy name.

All people can be saved to the uttermost!

Read Romans 12:1-21

The Wesleys challenged those who wanted to follow Jesus like them to strive to be perfect in love. It sounds impossible, but the same challenge is present in chapter 12 of Romans, “Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves.” How can we do that? How can we be perfect? Well, simple, we can’t quite, but we can live our lives like Jesus would both in ethics and in action.

Hymn <https://youtu.be/Zea3QsSFcgo>

Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of Heaven, to earth come down,
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
All Thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.

Breathe, O, breathe Thy loving Spirit
Into every troubled breast;
Let us all in Thee inherit,
Let us find Thy promised rest;
Take away the love of sinning,
Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith, as its beginning,
Set our hearts at liberty.

Come, almighty to deliver,
Let us all Thy life receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more Thy temples leave:
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above,
Pray, and praise Thee without ceasing,
Glory in Thy perfect love.

Finish, then, Thy new creation:
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see Thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in Thee:

Changed from glory into glory,
Till in Heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Prayers for the World

The text in italics within the prayers are prompts inviting you to pray your own words. Be specific and be honest. God can take it and is listening!

God of love, we pray for the Church throughout the world. Enable every follower of Jesus witness to your grace. We pray for *people who in self-giving love are helping others at this time, for people missing the contact and fellowship of their local churches, for churches exploring new ways to minister to each other, for all followers of Jesus looking for ways to share your love and grace in these strange times.* Renew the worship of your people, as we worship in our homes all around the world today, that we will be a living fellowship in your Spirit who serve our neighbourhoods in your love.

Your kingdom come; **your will be done.**

God of mercy we pray for the state of the world... *for those who are anxious about finances, for failing business and people losing incomes, for those who continue to work to provide education, food, and healthcare all of whom are under for more pressure than usual... and for those who exercise power... for the courage to do what is right, for policies that care for the least, for guidance and faith in God who holds the future...* Show us how to live as members of a human family; to work for peace; to bear each other's burdens; to live out mercy and grace.

Your kingdom come; **your will be done.**

God of compassion, we pray for those who are ill or anxious at home or in hospital... *pray by name for anyone whom you know of working in healthcare or receiving treatment or in strict self-isolation because of health concerns...* We pray for those whose lives are filled with fear and despair...*the hungry, the homeless, the abused, those separated from family at this time, and those facing the deaths of loved ones without the ability to gather and mourn in the usual ways...* Draw near with your saving love and bring healing and hope to every person who is struggling right now.

Your kingdom come; **your will be done.**

Merciful God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as pass our understanding; pour into our hearts such love towards you that we, loving you above all things, may obtain your peace and live it out for others to see. Amen

Say the Lord's Prayer

These prayers are adapted from Methodist Worship Ordinary Service 3 No.15

Hymn <https://youtu.be/1M-64OwBK1E>

A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify,

A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.

To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfill;
O may it all my pow'rs engage
To do my Master's will!

Arm me with jealous care
As in Thy sight to live,
And now Thy servant, Lord, prepare
A strict account to give!

Help me to watch and pray,
And still on Thee rely,
O let me not my trust betray,
But press to realms on high.

Benediction

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you,
wherever He may send you.

May He guide you through the wilderness,
protect you through the storm.

May He bring you home rejoicing
at the wonders He has shown you.

May He bring you home rejoicing
once again into our doors.

Amen

The benediction comes from the Northumbria Community order for Morning Prayer

Activity

Maybe try one or more of these activities as part of your worship today

- Telephone a person in the church directory whom you do not know very well and see how they are holding up during lockdown. We can all be a flicker of God's hope in someone's life.
- Offer to pray for someone on the telephone. Ask them what they want prayer for and pray for them there and then on the phone. There is nothing quite like someone praying for you out of the love of their hearts.
- Draw, print, or write a message of encouragement or from scripture and stick it up in your front window for passers-by to read. You can look at <https://proclaim.faithlife.com/verse-of-the-day> for some inspiration of what is possible. You would be surprised how many people stop to read the sign in your window.