

Bangor & Holyhead Methodist Circuit

Sunday Worship Sheet – Sunday 20th September 2020

Our Worship for this week was written by Mrs Ellie Jones, one of our Local Preachers and a member at St. John's, Bangor. You may wish to have your Bible to hand.

Call to worship

The God we worship is boundlessly generous to us, beyond any human idea of fairness. God calls us all, the strong and the weak, the grateful and the grumblers, those who have much to give and those who have little. So come and worship the God whose generosity is beyond words. **Amen**

Hymn: StF.103. *God is love: let heaven adore him*

God is Love: let heaven adore him;
God is Love: let earth rejoice;
let creation sing before him,
and exalt him with one voice.
He who laid the earth's foundation,
he who spread the heavens above,
he who breathes through all creation,
he is Love, eternal Love.

God is Love: and though with blindness
sin afflicts each human soul,
God's eternal loving-kindness
holds and guides and keeps them whole.
Sin and death and hell shall never
o'er us final triumph gain;
God is Love, so Love for ever
o'er the universe must reign.

Timothy Rees (1874–1939) (alt.)

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God is Love: and he, enfolding
all the world in one embrace,
with unfailing grasp is holding
every child of every race.
And when human hearts are breaking
under sorrow's iron rod,
then they find that selfsame aching
deep within the heart of God.

Prayer of adoration

Creator God, all the universe, all you have made, proclaims your greatness. Mountain top and ocean depths declare your power.

You are our God and King. **Every day we will bless you.**

Almighty God, the sun and stars proclaim your glory. Night and day you show us the dazzling beauty of all creation.

You are our God and King. **Every day we will bless you.**

Ever-loving God, the abundance of the earth displays your generosity. The outstretched arms of Christ your son, reveal your overwhelming love. **You are our God and King. Amen**

Prayer of confession

Dear Lord of all that is, we confess that we often fail to live up to what we expect of ourselves and what you hope for us.

Forgive us, God of love, when we are the first to take and the last to give; when we are first in the queue for the best things, and the last to say thank you for all that we have;

Forgive us, God of love when we are the first to complain that things aren't fair, and the last to be grateful for all we have been given.

Forgive us and help us to live more peaceably and fairly in your Kingdom and to be more loving and more grateful for all that you have done for us. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Because God loves us, and because his Son was willing to die to prove it, our sins are forgiven. Thanks be to our merciful God. **Amen.**

Hymn: StF.470. *Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided*

Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided,
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

Lord, for that word, the Word of life which fires us,
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us,
Lord of the word, receive your people's praise.

Lord, for our land, in this our generation,
spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care;
for young and old, for commonwealth and nation,
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

Lord, for our world; when we disown and doubt him,
loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain;
hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him,
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.

Lord, for ourselves; in living power remake us,
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne;
past put behind us, for the future take us,
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

Timothy Dudley-Smith (b. 1926)

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Gospel Reading: **Matthew 20:1-16**

Sermon: Living in the kingdom - "So the last will be first and the first will be last." **Matt 20:16**
We all remember the story of Moses leading the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt into the freedom of the Promised Land? Over forty years it took for them to learn to be obedient to God.

God still wants us to be obedient to him, but Christians today are very fortunate. We do not have to wander in the desert for years before we reach the Promised Land. Because Jesus Christ **is** our Promised Land. A land we reach as soon as we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. And yes, Jesus wants us to be obedient to his Father God but his rules are very simple indeed. To love God and to love our neighbour (Matthew 22: 34-40).

But why should we do this? Because, God loved us first. And as soon as we love him back, we live in his Kingdom.

The Promised Land was a real physical place. But the Kingdom of God is not a place as such. It is the reigning of Christ in our hearts as King of us, body and soul; and it's our willingness to bring everything about us, our thoughts and actions and feelings and intentions, under the rule of his love. The Kingdom of God doesn't even have a king, only a loving father, full of mercy and love and unfailing generosity. And the Kingdom will only fully come about when Christ comes again some time in the far future. Meanwhile it is our job is to try to work towards the fulfilled Kingdom by trying to live as Christ has taught us.

Jesus uses the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard to teach about the Kingdom, in response to Peter's question about what the disciples who had left homes and jobs to follow Jesus, could expect in the Kingdom? Jesus's answer applies to us today just as much as to Peter then. What can **we** expect in the Kingdom?

The parable is set at harvest time in the vineyards of Galilee. Extra workers have to be hired to help get the grapes in before the annual rains, day workers, paid a denarius a day - just enough to feed the worker and his family for that day. The vineyard owner employs some men at the start of the day, some a little later, and some almost at the end of the day. This seems a strange thing to do. Perhaps the storm clouds were gathering and the owner was worried his grapes would be spoilt. But what is really surprising about this parable is that all the workers were paid the same, whether they had worked the full twelve hours or whether they had only worked one hour!

Does that seem fair to us? Would we have been angry, if that had happened to us? Well, for a start, Jesus was not giving an **economics** lesson here, but a **spiritual** lesson. Just as the owner of the vineyard exercised his right to pay his workers as he saw fit, giving the same pay to the first as to the last, so will God give to us, not according to what we deserve, but according to his grace. And how wonderful is that, that we can be assured of God's generosity whether we came to Christ as children or late in life, and whether we have worked all our lives to try to build up his Kingdom or not. Perhaps the owner of the vineyard had the sort of generosity with his workers as God has with us so that he paid the workers the same so **all** would be able to eat.

The grumbles of the workers who resented being paid the same for a day's work as those who had done little shows us there is no room for such complaining nor for jealousy in God's Kingdom. God accepts us all. We are all invited into his Kingdom because God's grace sets no barriers. All are welcome and equal before God.

What can our response to such generosity be but to accept it with grateful joy and take up the challenge of Christ's two simple rules, and do whatever we can to help build up that Kingdom, until Christ comes again. **Amen.**

Prayer of thanksgiving

We thank you, gracious God, that you have work for each of us to do to help build up your kingdom. Help us to do that work as best we can and help us to rejoice that in your kingdom, **all are needed and are valued in your sight.**

In the name of Jesus Christ, our saviour. **Amen.**

Prayers for Others

Dear Lord we bring before you the needs of others and ourselves, in these times of change because of the continuing threat of coronavirus; our concerns about racial equality and the issues behind the Black Lives Matter Campaign which relate to us all, as well as our worry about climate change and the need for us to try to repair the damage we have done to our world while we can.

Bless us in these times of change and keep us all open to each other and willing to cooperate to build a more just and equitable society.

Dear Lord we are aware that there are still people like the men left standing in the marketplace: the long-term unemployed; school-leavers and college leavers with so few jobs available for them now as well as people newly redundant in this global pandemic.

We pray that we will find opportunities to help those seeking work and those made poor or even homeless because so many jobs have been lost during lockdown. We pray that those with the resources to be generous, will try to help those in need.

We pray for all those who feel they have been unkindly or unjustly treated. May they find a welcome and a safe shelter and resting-place in our churches of all denominations.

Dear Lord we pray now for those known to us in special need of your love and comfort because they are struggling to carry on for whatever reason.

– PAUSE AND NAME THEM TO GOD –

Comfort them and fill their hearts with the warmth of your love and the assurance of your everlasting compassion and forgiveness.

Lastly a prayer for ourselves.

We ask you to move again in our hearts and in our lives, so that we will be strengthened for the work you call us to do. Inspire us when we get tired, and comfort us when the going is hard. Put a song in our hearts to gladden the day, and fill us with the joy and peace you wish for us. **Amen.**

Hymn: StF.465. *Guide me, O thou great Jehovah*

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand:
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore;
feed me now and evermore.

When I tread the verge of Jordan
bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side:
songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee;
I will ever give to thee.

Open thou the crystal fountain
whence the healing stream shall flow;
let the fiery, cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through:
strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield;
be thou still my strength and shield.

William Williams (1717–1791)
translated by Peter Williams (1727–1796)
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Closing Prayer

May the generosity of God challenge and inspire us to be generous in our turn,
with our time, our talents and our resources,
and to treat ourselves, each other and the strangers we meet,
with dignity, fairness and respect.
And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and evermore. **Amen.**



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