

Worship for Conference Sunday (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Welcome to worship on this fourth Sunday after Pentecost. The Methodist Conference is taking place currently. Like which so many annual events this year it is being held in a virtual form this year with a reduced agenda. Please pray for those 'attending' conference as business is conducted in this new way and remember in your prayers those who today had hoped to be ordained – something that will now happen sometime in the future.

Thank you to the team who have prepared or taken part in this act of worship – Kate Tennyson and Tim Pearson, Jill Lloyd and Graham Howe – one of our Local Preachers who is the preacher for today and my circuit colleagues the Rev'd Jeongsook Kim and the Rev'd Jemima Strain. My name is Audrey Simpson. Welcome to worship

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship (based on Psalm 13)

Trust in the unfailing love of God
Let our hearts rejoice in God's calling of us.

God does not abandon us
though we wrestle with doubt and sorrow.

God does not turn away and hide
instead God's light shines in the darkness.

God shields us from all threat
and lifts us when we fall.

Trust in the unfailing love of God
Let our hearts rejoice in God's calling of us.

Come let us worship God.

StF 169 – Come thou long-expected Jesus

**1. Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free,
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our res in thee.**

**2. Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art,
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.**

**3. Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a king,
born to reign in us for ever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.**

**4. By thine own eternal Spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all-sufficient merit
raise us to thy glorious throne.**

Prayer of approach

O God, your Spirit draws us into your presence,
and so we come – drawn by love, upheld by
grace –

to encounter Jesus, our Saviour.

We know him as our master.

We know him as our friend.

In him we see the Father, whose love sent Jesus
to us.

Spirit, Son and Father,

we draw close in faith to offer our worship.

Amen.

*Prayer of Adoration – written by primary school
pupil Paul Jason*

Praise the Lord

The one who sets us free,

The one who gives us happiness,

The one who forgives us our sins,

The one who died for us,

The one who created everything.

Thank you, Jesus, for your greatness.

Amen.

Prayer of confession

Comforter draw near. You who have waited and watched, as we have stumbled through the tasks of life. Come along side us.

Our ears have not been open to the sound of your gentleness, and so with frustration and anger we have turned on others and, at times, on those we love and cherish. We have brought hurt and division to life.

Our eyes have not noticed the beauty of our surroundings, and in resentment at being restrained from living, we have played our part in the changing pattern of creation, forgetting to steward all you have made.

Our hearts have not been open to the example of Christ and so in selfishness we have sought to win, to gain, to acquire at a cost to others. We have been unjust in our living.

In prayer we remember you invite us to choose between the path of darkness and the path of light. We lay our sorrow and failure on the ground before you and pray that you will forgive us. Call us afresh to choose the path of Christ. Equip us by your Holy Spirit to walk with you in our everyday living.

Silence

Friends in Christ hear this – in the name of Jesus Christ your sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God Amen

HYMN: So Will I (100 Billion X) – by Hillsongs United

God of creation

**There at the start, before the beginning of time
With no point of reference
You spoke to the dark and fleshed out the wonder of light**

And as You speak

**A hundred billion galaxies are born
In the vapour of Your breath the planets form**

**If the stars were made to worship, so will I
I can see Your heart in everything You've made
Every burning star, a signal fire of grace
If creation sings Your praises, so will I**

God of Your promise

**You don't speak in vain, no syllable empty or void
For once You have spoken
All nature and science, follow the sound of Your voice**

And as You speak

**A hundred billion creatures catch Your breath
Evolving in pursuit of what You said
If it all reveals Your nature, so will I
I can see Your heart in everything You say
Every painted sky, a canvas of Your grace
If creation still obeys You, so will I
So will I, so will I**

**If the stars were made to worship, so will I
If the mountains bow in reverence, so will I
If the oceans roar Your greatness, so will I
For if everything exists to lift You high, so will I
And if the wind goes where You send it, so will I
If the rocks cry out in silence, so will I
If the sum of all our praises still falls shy
Then we'll sing again a hundred billion times!**

God of salvation

**You chased down my heart through all of my failure and pride
On a hill You created
The light of the world abandoned in darkness to die**

And as You speak

**A hundred billion failures disappear
Where You lost Your life so I could find it here
If You left the grave behind You, so will I
I can see Your heart in everything You've done
Every part designed in a work of art called love
If You gladly chose surrender, so will I
I can see Your heart, eight billion different ways**

**Every precious one, a child You died to save
If You gave Your life to love them, so will I**

**Like You would again a hundred billion times
But what measure could amount to Your
desire?**

**You're the One who never leaves the one
behind**

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

1st Reading Jeremiah 28:5-9

(New Living Translation - NLT)

⁵Jeremiah responded to Hananiah as they stood in front of all the priests and people at the Temple. ⁶He said, "Amen! May your prophecies come true! I hope the Lord does everything you say. I hope he does bring back from Babylon the treasures of this Temple and all the captives. ⁷But listen now to the solemn words I speak to you in the presence of all these people. ⁸The ancient prophets who preceded you and me spoke against many nations, always warning of war, disaster, and disease. ⁹So a prophet who predicts peace must show he is right. Only when his predictions come true can we know that he is really from the Lord."

Gospel Matthew 10:40-42

(New Living Translation - NLT)

⁴⁰"Anyone who receives you receives me, and anyone who receives me receives the Father who sent me. ⁴¹If you receive a prophet as one who speaks for God, you will be given the same reward as a prophet. And if you receive righteous people because of their righteousness, you will be given a reward like theirs. ⁴²And if you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded."

Sermon Christian Hope

Hello – well Ann and I send you greetings, to everyone, from the top of Leamington. Our flat overlooks Christchurch Gardens at the top of the

parade. We have just been able to go and have a picnic (at last) to our favourite escape spot (our caravan) just outside Stratford and we are hopeful that we will be able to spend more time there soon.

Our bible passage this morning, from Jeremiah I hope will give us some helpful insights into Christian Hope. The one from Matthew, some pointers to "living today".

First a story....

Ann and I lived in Birmingham when we first got married. We bought a house in the road that I had been born in. Every workday, I walked about ¼ mile to the bus stop in order to catch the bus into Birmingham City centre to work. At the top of the road we lived in I turned left and passed several houses set back from the road. In the middle of a row of houses there lived an elderly, large woman. Very often in the mornings I would see her going up and down the garden paths of the houses in the row. I realised as time went by that she was "knocking up" the occupants of the houses to ensure they got up for work. She was always still in her dressing gown and slippers, irrespective of the weather, and invariably would greet me with her usual greeting which was "**terrible in't it!**" It didn't matter whether it was sunny, raining, early or late. The greeting was always the same. Ann and I called her "**old Mrs Shuffle Slippers**". When we had our first child and pushed her out in a pram, old Mrs Shuffle Slippers greeted us with "Ooo, didn't know you got a "Bab" – terrible is it" Ann and I had to laugh.

As time went by, I realised that in fact old Mrs Shuffle Slippers was trying to empathise and give herself in the way she knew how.

Now some people are really naturally optimistic and some people are natural pessimists. Which one are you? The minister of the first church that Ann and I were part of used to say of me that I

was like a rubber ball. If I got hit with a hammer I would just “bounce”. Being naturally optimistic can be helpful but can also be a hindrance. If God wants to speak to a natural optimist then gentle pressure is often the way he does it, to reshape.

The Bible story in Jeremiah chapter 28 tells of Hananiah’s prophecy to the people – a positive one. Telling the people that everything would be restored from captivity back to Jerusalem. Everything will be alright soon. In fact you have read on to the end of chapter 28 to find out that Hananiah wasn’t actually bringing the word of God, but his own optimistic view! God speaks to Jeremiah a very different word and he has the job of delivering it to Hananiah.

He also writes to those in exile in Babylon (in chapter 29) from Jerusalem and tells them to “seek peace and prosperity in the land to which God has carried them” and “pray for the land where they are” and “not to just listen to natural optimists”.

So, I hear you ask – where’s your hope and good news for now! Not just the empathy of “old Mrs SS” but real hope.

Hope, Christian Hope, is knowing as Ephesians 4 v 6 says that “God is over all, through all and in all”

Tom Wright has written many wonderful books, I think the only one that I have read cover to cover, is called “Surprised by Hope”. It gives real foundation to the work God does in our hearts, creating solid hope for both now and eternity in the work that we do now.

To Wright writes:

“What you do in the present—by painting, preaching, singing, sewing, praying, teaching, building hospitals, digging wells, campaigning for justice, writing poems, caring for the needy, loving your neighbour as yourself—will last into God’s future. These activities are not simply ways of making the present life a little less beastly, a

little more bearable, until the day when we leave it behind altogether. They are part of what we may call building for God’s kingdom.”

Tom Wright – Surprised by Hope.

So, turning to Matthew’s Gospel – what guidance does he give us to living in our current times:

In the verses I have taken 3 “keep on’s” to keep us going and have our “firm foundations” in “Christian Hope”

Keep on – Listening – hear the words of those speaking God’s word to you. Try or test what they say and if it resonates hold it closely in your heart. Keep listening closely to what God is saying to you. Don’t just listen to natural optimism or pessimism. If you listen to God’s voice you will become God’s messenger.

Keep on Receiving – receiving is sometimes as hard as it is to give. The message Bible says “accepting someone’s help is as good as giving someone help”. If you are able to receive help you will also know how to give it.

Keep on Giving – begin in small ways, “like the cup of water”. We learn from small steps and nothing is wasted in God’s economy.

Overall – remember that just as the whole of the book of Revelation teaches us “God is “over all”.

Finish with a quote from Tom Wright’s Surprised by Hope:

“people who believe in the resurrection, in God making a whole new world in which everything will be set right at last, are unstoppably motivated to work for that new world in the present.”

StF 628 – Faithful One

**Faithful One, so unchanging,
Ageless One, you’re my rock of peace.
Lord of all I depend on you,
I call out to you again and again.
I call out to you again and again.**

Faithful One, so unchanging,
Ageless One, you're my rock of peace.
Lord of all I depend on you,
I call out to you again and again.
I call out to you again and again.

You are my rock in times of trouble.
You lift me up when I fall down.
All through the storm your love is the anchor,
my hope is in you alone.
Faithful One, so unchanging,
Ageless One, you're my rock of peace.
Lord of all I depend on you,
I call out to you again and again.
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THE RESPONSE

Prayers of thanksgiving

For the welcome we find here,
we thank you.
For the love you show us,
we thank you.
For the kindness we find in those who are
faithful to you,
we thank you.
For your strength in times of weakness,
we thank you.
For hope when doubt overwhelms,
we thank you.
And for your love for one and all,
we thank you.
May your welcome become an invitation we

extend to others.

May your love be a love we share with others.
And may we grow in faith,
as you keep faith with us.
We ask this in Christ's name. **Amen.**

HYMN: There is a hope that burns within my
heart – by Mark Edwards and Stuart Townsend

**There is a hope that burns within my heart,
That gives me strength for every passing day;
A glimpse of glory now revealed in meagre part,
Yet drives all doubt away:
I stand in Christ, with sins forgiven;
And Christ in me, the hope of heaven!
My highest calling and my deepest joy,
To make His will my home.**

**There is a hope that lifts my weary head,
A consolation strong against despair,
That when the world has plunged me in its
deepest pit,
I find the Saviour there!
Through present sufferings, future's fear,
He whispers 'courage' in my ear.
For I am safe in everlasting arms,
And they will lead me home.**

**There is a hope that stands the test of time,
That lifts my eyes beyond the beckoning grave,
To see the matchless beauty of a day divine
When I behold His face!
When sufferings cease and sorrows die,
And every longing satisfied.
Then joy unspeakable will flood my soul,
For I am truly home.**

Prayers of intercession

Gracious God, you set before us your world,
a place of many delights with much beauty.
We pray for the world and its many people that
the choices and decisions made by the leaders of
the nations will be for the benefit of all, so all
may share the beauty and delight of your
creation.

We think particularly of those areas of the world where there are corrupt leaders,

where there is violence and injustice,

where there is starvation and drought.

Gracious God, your will for the world is life,
root in us that same will.

You set before us your Church, in multicultural diversity and difference.

We pray for the worldwide Church that she may be faithful to the roots of the gospel, that we as members of the Church will be faithful to you, proclaiming boldly and fearlessly that you are God and our hope is in you.

We pray for the church where there is persecution, where there is indifference.

Gracious God, your will for the Church is love,
root in us that same love.

You set before us our communities in large cities and small hamlets.

We pray for the communities in which we live and work.

We think particularly of communities torn by ethnic tensions, communities deprived of the basic essentials.

We pray for any whose truth speaking has cost them their job.

We pray for people who have no one to speak up for them.

We pray for any whose experience of prejudice or false friendship is deep and hurtful, who find mockery relentless and the passive aggression of a society ignoring gender injustice, ethnic bias or other prejudice too exhausting to keep on absorbing.

We pray for any whose mental health is under strain because of the nature of their role, especially in positions of leadership.

Gracious God, your will for humanity is life,
root in us that same will.

You set before us our neighbours, friends and families, those we like and those we find it hard to like.

We pray for our neighbours, friends and all who are suffering from ill health, from the death of loved one, from ...

(name specific people and situations).

Father, we adore you and we ask that your loving arms reach out and embrace those who are alone at this time. Be with them, Lord, as they miss the regular contact they would normally enjoy with neighbours, friends and family.

May your Holy Spirit enable the isolated to know that you are always here. Let this time allow us to reach out to others by prayer, word or post so that the isolated know your compassion and heart of love.

Protect them in their isolation and may they know that they are never truly alone as you are always there with them. Comfort them, Lord, by your presence in their darkest hours.

Gracious God, your will for humanity is love and life,
root in us that same love and life.

Merciful Father, please accept all these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Let us be united by praying together the Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in Heaven,
Hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive our sins**

as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil,
For the kingdom, the power and the glory
are yours, now and forever. Amen.

The Offering & prayer

Loving God, there are many ways in which
we can use our money, energy and time ;
our talents and our abilities to love ;
but we offer them all to you.

Please accept our willing gifts, and bless them
and help us to use them wisely for your kingdom.
In the name of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

THE DISMISSAL

StF 351 – In Christ alone my hope is found

1. **In Christ alone my hope is found,
he is my light, my strength, my song;
this Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
here in the love of Christ I stand.**
2. **In Christ alone! – who took on flesh,
fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
scorned by the ones he came to save:
till on that cross as Jesus dies,
the wrath of God was satisfied
for every sin on him was laid;
here in the death of Christ I live.**
3. **There in the ground his body lay,
light of the world by darkness slain:
then bursting forth in glorious Day
up from the grave he rose again!
And as he stands in victory,
sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
for I am his and he is mine –
bought with the precious blood of Christ.**

4. **No guilt in life, no fear in death,
this is the power of Christ in me;
from life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
can ever pluck me from his hand;
till he returns of calls me home,
here in the power of Christ I'll stand!**

Prayer & blessing

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in
believing

Now let us say the Grace together:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ

The love of God

And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

Be with us all, now and for evermore.

Amen