

Worship for Sunday 10th October 2021 (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

THE PREPARATION

Welcome, it is good to have you with us. A little more about the service in a moment, but let us begin with a hymn and a prayer, and these reassuring words from the Bible. They were written by one of the first followers of Jesus and liken him to a down-to-earth priest who takes us into the holy presence of God.

“We have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God . . . not a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” *Hebrews 4.14-16*

StF 531 *What a friend we have in Jesus*

- 1 **What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear !
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer !
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer !**
- 2 **Have we trials and temptations,
is there trouble anywhere ?
We should never be discouraged :
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
who will all our sorrows share ?
Jesus knows our every weakness :
take it to the Lord in prayer.**

- 3 **Are we weak and heavy-laden,
cumbered with a load of care ?
Precious Saviour, still our refuge —
take it to the Lord in prayer !
Do your friends despise, forsake you ?
Take it to the Lord in prayer ;
in his arms he'll take and shield you,
you will find a solace there.**

Joseph Medicott Scriven (1819–1886)

OPENING PRAYER

GOD OUR FATHER, we come to you through your Son in the assurance that you are present with us now. We do not have to seek your presence -- we are daily living in your presence. Make us aware of it. Make it real to us. Help us to know that we are worshipping one who is near and not far off, whose love is all around us, and who knows our every need. We ask it through our Lord Jesus. Amen.

Who we are

This act of worship comes from South Warwickshire Methodist Circuit. The preacher is the Rev. Jeongsook Kim, who serves churches in Warwick and Kenilworth. She speaks of our need to trust in God even in the toughest times. The lessons are read online by David Gill of Kineton Methodist Church and Sonia Boulton of Mickleton. The worship leader is Stafford Mortimer, another Mickleton member. The service was created online and in print by a team led by Kate Tennyson, Andrew Barker and Catherine Evans-Routley.

A prayer of praise

DEAR FATHER, you are worthy of praise from every creature, from the rising of the sun to its setting. In grace, you created the world and in compassion you redeemed it. Your might is beyond measure, your wisdom beyond knowledge,

your love beyond telling.
We bless you for the gift of life,
for your guiding hand upon us
and your sustaining love around us.
We bless you for the living presence of your Holy Spirit,
for your Church, the body of Christ,
for the faith that is within us,
and in all these things for Jesus our high priest. Amen.

A prayer of confession

FOR turning away from you
and ignoring your will for our lives,
 Father, forgive us, save us and help us.
For failing you by what we do and think and say,
 Father, forgive us, save us and help us.
For not loving our neighbour,
 Father, forgive us, save us and help us.
For living as if we were ashamed of belonging to your Son,
 Father, forgive us, save us and help us.

A quiet moment of personal reflection.

Here is good news for all who put their trust in Christ.
Jesus says: "Your sins are forgiven."
Amen. Thanks be to God.

The Lord's Prayer

OUR FATHER who art in heaven
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen

We come now to the watershed of this service:
readings from the Bible, to which our worship has
been leading and from which will flow sustenance for
faith and action.

The first passage is from the book of Job, which has
given us a proverb: the patience of Job. It is unique in

the Old Testament, which is the Jewish Bible, in that
the hero is not a Jew but an Arab -- because the book
is about suffering, and suffering is universal.

The second reading is from the Gospel according to
Mark, about a young man who was shocked by what
Christ told him.

Just two stories from the wonderful world of the
Bible, which is celebrated in the next hymn.

StF 161 Speak O Lord as we come to you

- 1 Speak, O Lord, as we come to you
to receive the food of your holy word.
Take your truth, plant it deep in us ;
shape and fashion us in your likeness,
that the light of Christ might be seen today
in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us
all your purposes, for your glory.**
- 2 Teach us, Lord, full obedience,
holy reverence, true humility.
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
in the radiance of your purity.
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
your majestic love and authority.
Words of power that can never fail ;
let their truth prevail over unbelief.**
- 3 Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds ;
help us grasp the heights of your plans for us.
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
that will echo down through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on your promises,
and by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, till your Church is built
and the earth is filled with your glory.**

Keith Getty (b. 1974) and Stuart Townend (b. 1963)

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THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Old Testament

Job 23:1-9,16-17

Job Replies: My Complaint Is Bitter

Then Job answered:

'Today also my complaint is bitter;

his hand is heavy despite my groaning.
O that I knew where I might find him,
that I might come even to his dwelling!
I would lay my case before him,
and fill my mouth with arguments.
I would learn what he would answer me,
and understand what he would say to me.
Would he contend with me in the greatness of his
power?
No; but he would give heed to me.
There an upright person could reason with him,
and I should be acquitted for ever by my judge.

'If I go forward, he is not there;
or backward, I cannot perceive him;
on the left he hides, and I cannot behold him;
I turn to the right, but I cannot see him.
God has made my heart faint;
the Almighty has terrified me;
If only I could vanish in darkness,
and thick darkness would cover my face!

Psalm

Psalm 22

Plea for Deliverance from Suffering and Hostility

To the leader: according to The Deer of the Dawn. A
Psalm of David.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from helping me, from the
words of my groaning?
O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.

Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.
In you our ancestors trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.
To you they cried, and were saved;
in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.

But I am a worm, and not human;
scorned by others, and despised by the people.
All who see me mock at me;
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;

'Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver—
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!'

Yet it was you who took me from the womb;
you kept me safe on my mother's breast.
On you I was cast from my birth,
and since my mother bore me you have been my
God.
Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.

Many bulls encircle me,
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;
they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.

I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax;
it is melted within my breast;
my mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
you lay me in the dust of death

New Testament

Hebrews 4: 12-16

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper
than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides
soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to
judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And
before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked
and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we
must render an account.

Jesus the Great High Priest

Since, then, we have a great high priest who has
passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of
God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do
not have a high priest who is unable to

sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Gospel:

Mark 10:17-31

The Rich Man

As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother." ' He said to him, 'Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.' Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, 'You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!' And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, 'Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.' They were greatly astounded and said to one another, 'Then who can be saved?' Jesus looked at them and said, 'For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.'

Peter began to say to him, 'Look, we have left everything and followed you.' Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first

StF 552 Here am I, Lord

**Here am I, Lord,
I've come to do your will ;
here am I, Lord,
in your presence I am still.**

Northumbria Community
from *Celtic Daily Prayer*

Sermon

In today's reading from Job, Job expresses his frustrations and his anger against God in very clear terms. This may make us feel uncomfortable, but in real life we all face difficult times. There is a long history in Scripture of people presenting their complaints to God. We see this in today's psalm as well as in Job's words. Speaking to God in this way may seem arrogant, but the reading from Hebrews reminds us that Christ sympathises with us and encourages us to approach God with boldness.

"Today also my complaint is bitter; his hand is heavy despite my groaning.

Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his dwelling!"

How many of us have been where Job is, asking, "Where are you, God?

If I close my eyes, are you still there? If I open them, why can't I see you?"

We don't understand what God is doing or what God is up to and so we try to figure it out with our human limitations.

There is a saying that 'trouble comes in threes'. Why do we feel that this is the case, and how do we respond? Is there really such a thing as 'luck' or 'fate' that chooses to assault us with difficult times? What often happens is that after a significant difficulty in life, we find it harder to deal with new problems as they come along. We may be tempted to turn

away from God and from friends in times of trouble, but these should be the times when we acknowledge our need and seek help and comfort.

The final verse of Job's complaint sounds very much like 'hiding your head under a pillow'. When things go wrong, we can be tempted to lock ourselves away. We live in a society where self-reliance is often promoted above community. But this is not God's intention for his Church. Perhaps sometimes when we feel God is not listening to our complaint the answer is already to be found in those around us if we have the humility to accept it. Equally we must be willing to respond with great generosity to others in need. This is Jesus' message to the rich young ruler in the Gospel reading. Christ is challenging not so much his wealth but his self-reliance.

In our Gospel today, a man asks Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" That strikes as an interesting phrase. Is there anything that the man could do on his own to inherit eternal life? Jesus answers this question by reminding him that only God is good and of the commandments that pertain to community relationships. The man replies that he had kept all those commandments since his youth. Jesus didn't doubt his sincerity—he looked at him and loved him—and because he loved him, he tells him the truth: the one thing that he lacked was full reliance on God. He needed to sell everything, give the money to the poor, and follow Jesus.

Notice that Jesus didn't condemn the man for being wealthy. Jesus knew that wealth in itself was not bad, but it made things more difficult for a person who was wealthy to realize their full dependence on God. If you think about it, many times, when we have an ample amount of money and we feel things are going our way, we feel self-sufficient. After all, we have worked hard for a good

life, haven't we? It's ours. But that attitude can block us from responding wholly to the gifts that God alone can give us – a full, whole life now and eternal life in the future.

There was a family with a disabled son who required constant care. To secure his future they sold up their home and raised money to establish a house in which he and a handful of other disabled people and carers could live securely. Although this is not a story about giving up everything to follow Jesus, is it perhaps an example of the kind of sacrifice Jesus speaks of, and also of the unintended (at the beginning) and positively wonderful consequences of doing so? Do you know other stories of people who have risked all for a different future?

Which is the true me? Most of us present ourselves carefully to God and the world. But if God knows us and loves us, why might trusting in him completely be such a risk? What if trusting all to God doesn't diminish or restrict our lives but enhances them? So, what holds us back from committing totally to God? After all, God has committed himself completely to his creation and to us in Jesus' death and resurrection.

Can a camel fit through the eye of a needle? The rich young ruler seemed to be doing everything he could to earn eternal life. He followed the laws and thought that the effort he put in and the way he lived his life would tick all the boxes. But then Jesus said something that changed everything for him. A humorous comment (what might a modern equivalent be in your context?), but a serious message. What might get in the way of our entering the kingdom of God?

In this passage, people make choices. The rich young man chose to follow the laws for most of his life. He had another choice to make when Jesus suggested that he sell all he had

in order to inherit eternal life. The disciples also made choices, as Peter points out towards the end of the passage, declaring that they (the disciples) left everything to follow Jesus. Jesus commended them, but that doesn't mean eternal life is the result of completing a tick list of requirements. So, what is the answer? The real answer is back in Mark 10: 27: for humans it is impossible; only God can make it happen. And the real wise choice is to be in a right relationship with God by making Jesus a priority and weighing up all other choices through the lens of the characteristics of Jesus and his lifestyle.

We can probably name individuals whose lives modelled simplicity and obedience to the commandments. They seem to be given hero status, people such as St. Francis or Mother Theresa, for example. We can't imagine ourselves living as they lived. They are saints; we are not. It is unimaginable, impossible, or unrealistic to think of ourselves in this way. Yet we are closer to understanding the principles they lived by than we are willing to admit. What might be missing are the bold and radical actions that came out of loving God and their neighbours. Jesus gave us the best example of total surrender to God. Through bold and radical actions and words, Jesus trusted that God would provide. He humbled himself in faith and obedience.

We especially emphasize the Incarnation—the fact that Jesus came to dwell among us, with human hands and feet—living in daily human life. That is an example of God doing something new, something radical. Jesus telling the wealthy man to give up what interferes with his full reliance on God is a continuation of that new work. It is a continued call for us to be radical. For us to rely on Job's God is a radical call. That love is incarnational—it means that there is more to

life than emptiness— it means that there is richness in living in community with others—true community—where you can share and pray and serve with others. It is about living your best life—about becoming who your Creator created you to be. But we can't do that if we allow things to hold us back from a deeper relationship with God—we are called to total stewardship—body, mind, and soul.

StF 545 Be thou my vision

- 1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
be all else but naught to me, save that thou
art ;
be thou my best thought in the day and the
night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my
light.**
- 2 Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord ;
be thou my great Father, thy child let me be ;
be thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.**
- 3 Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the
fight ;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true
might ;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong
tower :
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of
my power.**
- 4 Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise :
be thou mine inheritance now and always ;
be thou and thou only the first in my heart :
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.**
- 5 High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won ;
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.**

Irish, 8th century

translated by Mary Elizabeth Byrne (1880–1931)

versified by Eleanor Henrietta Hull (1860–1935) (alt.)

THE RESPONSE

Prayers of thanksgiving

Let us pray for ourselves:

LORD GOD, we thank you for showing us how to trust you in all the ups and downs of life. When we worry about our daily needs, bring to our minds Christ's promise that the Father who cares for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field cares so much more for us. When we face the big crises of life and death, bring to our minds Jesus's prayer in the agony of the Cross: "Father, into your hands I commend my Spirit." In all circumstances may we turn to you, the God who is proclaimed in the Christian Gospel, who gives us a helping hand through our families, friends and the caring professions, and who meets us in the innermost depths of our beings. In Jesus's name we pray, Amen.

The Offering

Let us dedicate the money and time we give to the Church, to charities and to community life.

LORD, bless our giving and our doing, that they may truly be expressions of our love and of yours. Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Let us offer our intercessions.

In our prayer for the Church, the Methodist Prayer Handbook asks us to remember on this day Christians in Uruguay, South America's smallest nation. Its Methodists are campaigning against state oppression of the poor and domestic violence against women and girls. In our prayer for the world, we take note that this is World Homeless Day. In our prayer for loved ones, let us remember especially those suffering constant pain.

LORD GOD, strengthen your Church: the congregations to which we belong, our sisters and brothers in Uruguay, and churches across the world. May all who confess your name live together in love and set forth Christ's Gospel in word and deed.

DIRECT all nations, Lord, in the ways of justice and peace. In the name of your Son Jesus, who became a refugee and had no place to call his own, we ask mercy and help for those who have fled danger in their native lands and are homeless and hungry. May

those who govern our own nation and lead our communities make provision for the homeless. Bless charities working to bring them relief; and inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts to come to their aid.

FATHER, we bring before you all whom we love in our family circle, knowing that your love for them is so much greater than ours. We are moved and saddened by whose ill health causes constant pain. May their fortitude be strengthened and relief come through medical care. Forgive us if our feelings of helplessness lead to impatience or despair, and show us how to be thoughtful carers and companions.

All these our prayers we ask in the name of Christ the Lord. Amen.

THE DISMISSAL

Blessing & Final Hymn

Our service concludes with this blessing and a hymn of praise to the God in whom we trust.

GO in peace, and may the holy God surprise you on the way, Christ Jesus be your company, and the Spirit lift up your life. Amen.

StF 81 Now thank we all our God

- 1 Now thank we all our God,
with hearts and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done,
in whom this world rejoices ;
who from our mothers' arms
has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.**
- 2 O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts
and blessèd peace to cheer us ;
and keep us in his grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills
in this world and the next.**
- 3 All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given,
the Son, and him who reigns
with them in highest heaven,**

**the one eternal God,
whom earth and heaven adore,
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.**

Martin Rinkart (1586–1649)

translated by Catherine Winkworth (1827–1878)

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StF 161 Speak O Lord as we come to you

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StF 531 What a friend we have in Jesus

Joseph Medlicott Scriven (1819–1886)

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StF 545 Be thou my vision

Irish, 8th century

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StF 81 Now thank we all our God

Martin Rinkart (1586–1649)

translated by Catherine Winkworth (1827–1878)

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Permission being sought:

Stf 552 Here I am, Lord

Northumbria Community

from *Celtic Daily Prayer*

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Bible Verses

NRSV & NRSVA

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