

Worship for 5th Sunday after Pentecost (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Welcome: to worship for 5TH Sunday after Pentecost

Thank you to all who have been involved in preparing our worship: Rev. Jeongsook Kim

who brings us a reflection, Russell Blackwell and Kat Pearson for preparing for the prayers,

Rev. Richard Wilde for the Bible readings, and to Tim Pearson for choosing and leading some

of our songs and editing the video which can be found on You Tube using the link in the

letter above. Thank you also to Kate Tennyson for pulling it all together. If any of you would like to take part, then please get in touch with barbara.greenwood@methodist.org.uk

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

Jesus says: 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.'

Let us come to the Lord Jesus.

Let us seek his rest.

Hymn 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.
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**

Prayer of approach

Lord Jesus, we come before you, with all our cares and worries, laying them down before you.

We come before you, setting aside this time to worship, opening up ourselves to you.

We come before you, in the expectation that you will take and transform us, before we return to the world once again, ready to face all that comes our way.

We trust in you and your promises, for you are indeed gentle and humble in heart,

Your yoke is easy and the burden you place on us is indeed light.

And you do grant us rest.

Amen

Prayer of adoration

Living God, Sovereign of a universe, which is both greater and more detailed than our imagining, in love you have made us, in love you sustain us day by day. We adore you.

You are the perfect Father who protects us and provides for us; the Son, who lived and died and rose again in our midst; the Spirit, who moves amongst us with energy like the wind. You are all these, and you are still far beyond our concepts, our hopes. We adore you

Living God, as we think of your greatness, we feel very small, and weak. Your power revealed in the forces of our planet and in the dynamism of other forms of life, reminds us how fragile we are and how strong is your love for each one of us. We adore you.

Praise be to you on earth and in heaven.
Amen.

Prayer of confession

To the bidding: 'Merciful Lord', Please respond:
Please forgive us'.

Hear us, O God, as we ask forgiveness for our
wrongdoing:

For the hurt we have caused you, and the hurt
we have caused those around us:

Merciful Lord

Please forgive us

For the unkind words we have used, and the
things we have failed to do:

Merciful Lord

Please forgive us

For our unwillingness to forgive, while depending
on your forgiveness of us:

Merciful Lord

Please forgive us

For the selfish way we ourselves have seized
opportunities, and denied opportunities to
others:

Merciful Lord

Please forgive us

For the prejudices we carry, for the sins of our
community:

Merciful Lord

Please forgive us

Compassionate God, hold us when we trip, pick
us up when we fall.

We ask in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen

Declaration of forgiveness

Here is good news for all who put their trust in
Christ.

Jesus says: 'Your sins are forgiven'.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

Hymn StF 15: The Splendour of the King

**The splendour of the King,
clothed in majesty;
let all the earth rejoice,
let all the earth rejoice.
He wraps himself in light
and darkness tries to hide,
and trembles at his voice,
and trembles at his voice.**

*How great is our God, sing with me,
how great is our God, and all will see
how great, how great is our God.*

**And age to age he stands,
and time is in his hands;
beginning and the end,
beginning and the end.
The Godhead, Three in One,
Father, Spirit, Son,
the Lion and the Lamb,
the Lion and the Lamb.**

*How great is our God, sing with me,
how great is our God, and all will see
how great, how great is our God.*

**Name above all names,
worthy of all praise;
my heart will sing:
how great is our God.
Name above all names,
worthy of all praise;
my heart will sing:
how great is our God.**

*How great is our God, sing with me,
how great is our God, and all will see
how great, how great is our God.*

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Psalm *Psalm 145: 8-14*

(New International Version)

⁸The Lord is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.

⁹The Lord is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.

¹⁰All your works praise you, Lord;
your faithful people extol you.

¹¹They tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,

¹²so that all people may know of your mighty
acts

and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

¹³Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures through all
generations.

The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises
and faithful in all he does.

¹⁴The Lord upholds all who fall
and lifts up all who are bowed down.

Epistle Romans 7: 15-25a

(New International Version)

¹⁵I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²²For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30

(New English Translation)

¹⁶“To what should I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces who call out to one another,

¹⁷“We played the flute for you, yet you did not dance;
we wailed in mourning, yet you did not weep.’

¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon!’ ¹⁹The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him, a glutton and a drunk, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ But wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

Jesus' Invitation

²⁵At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and revealed them to little children. ²⁶Yes, Father, for this was your gracious will. ²⁷All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son decides to reveal him. ²⁸Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke on you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy to bear, and my load is not hard to carry.”

Sermon

In our Gospel lesson, Jesus says, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

It has been a wearying time to be the church lately. The grief over the loss of so many lives to the coronavirus is a hard weight to bear in our families, in our communities, in our nation, in our world, in our churches. The loss of jobs and livelihoods is devastating. The inability to meet face to face, to congregate, to embrace, to comfort, and to console in person is nothing but a loss – a deep, aching loss. The shutting down of so much and the staying inside so long has felt like a long slog with heavy packs.

The leadership in our churches has been extraordinary. They've done amazing work livestreaming worship, recording sermons and prayers, checking in with people via telephone and emails, leading online Bible studies and prayer meetings, and attending many zoom meetings.

And yet, we also hear how wearying all this has been. Learning new technologies is frustrating. We spend hours upon hours recording and uploading a fifteen-minute or so sermon or four or five hymns and wonder how can this be. Online meeting formats seem designed to suck the life out of people, leaving us depleted.

The pandemic has exposed truths about ourselves that are hard to face. Inequalities in health care. Disparities in educational opportunities. The persistent and pervasive racism in our society.

It has also exposed truths about the church that are hard to face. The pressures on the church in late modern society have been a dull ache that we could ignore in better times.

We scramble to respond, but so often, despite our best intentions, we end up speaking in the terms and acting according to the rules that society sets for us, rather than in accordance

with the life and truth that we know in Christ, in the church, in the Gospel, in our traditions, in our faith, in our practices.

It is wearying to confront these truths. It is a burden to feel the need to constantly justify ourselves according to the rules of a game we did not choose to play. It's hard enough to live out the vision of the kingdom that our Lord gives to us. Blessed are the poor ... blessed are the meek ... blessed are those who mourn ... Now we are expected to show how this way of life is also reasonable, useful, inoffensive. It's tiring playing by somebody else's rules. Especially when we seem to know better and can't help ourselves.

The pandemic is revealing the pressure put upon churches to reduce pastoral care to therapy. Churches, communities of faith, priests, pastors, and other caregivers are being called upon to help people to deal with the staggering amount of death, loss, grief, and suffering unleashed by the spread of the coronavirus. Yes, of course, one hundred percent agreed.

Our Gospel lesson today offers genuine comfort to those of us who are weary and carrying heavy burdens.

Jesus' suggestion that we put on his yoke is unique to Matthew. With our hindsight knowledge of what the future holds for him, we may wonder about sharing his load. But Jesus is offering to share our load, to be in the yoke of life with us. In being yoked with him we can go his way, released from conformity to laws to learn from him how to overturn expectations and know true rest. In learning from him we allow a new story to be written that embraces hearing the flute and dancing. Like children, we are to look at the world in our own way, freed

from the burden of wisdom and intelligence, to simply come.

The Christian life can be seen as a journey or a pilgrimage. Elsewhere Paul uses the image of a race to describe it (1 Corinthians 9.24-27). Whatever the image we use, it needs to be dynamic and suggestive of growth. Am I in touch with my journey of life? Do I ever talk to someone about my journey? What happens if my 'ideal self' is not my 'real self'? Paul does not see Jesus as just the goal for which he is striving; Jesus Christ journeys *with him*. It is significant that Paul's conversion happened 'on the road' and we remember that his ministry until his death was similarly marked by many journeys.

Paul understands that even though he sometimes finds himself isolated, he is nevertheless part of the Body of Christ and that his fight against sin is not helped by a reliance on the righteousness of 'the law' but on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, God's Son.

The word sin, which is most often derived from the Greek word *hamartia*, appears 121 times in the New Testament. More than one fourth of those appearances are in the Book of Romans alone.

But *hamartia*, this word for sin, didn't actually originate with the New Testament. It originated with Aristotle, who uses it in reference to archers, whose arrows miss their target. Its literal definition is "to miss the mark," or "to make an error in judgment."

When we think of sin with the added dimension of missing a mark or a target, it suddenly becomes more relational.

Sin is less about asking what's in bounds or out of bounds and more about asking how we have "missed the mark" in our relationship with

our children or our partners; our neighbours or our friends; and ultimately, how we have "missed the mark" in our relationship with God.

This is the tension that Paul writes about in Romans: the tension between doing what is easy—making our lists and checking our boxes on our terms; and giving ourselves over to something that is absolutely beyond our control—a relationship with the God made known to us in Jesus Christ.

The tension between the two is so great that Paul writes that they are at war. "I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members."

We like to focus on what we can manage and control; on what we can figure out and solve. That's why we're so well-suited for list-making. The trouble with that is, we can't manage and control death or grief or relationships or other people, and we can't manage and control God. And when we try, we "miss the mark." We ignore the law of God, in favour of the law of sin—of distorted relationship. We come under the illusion that we can act or behave our way to salvation.

Truth be told, this is the heart of human sinfulness: the delusion that we can save ourselves. We try and try and try, but we miss the mark every time. But Paul, that fiery, uncompromising, stubborn, and controversial Apostle—bless his heart—reorients us to the truth.

He writes, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Although we continue to miss the mark with our lists and our egos and our insatiable desire to manage and control, God is determined to love us more than we can possibly imagine; to

redeem our brokenness; and to save us in spite of ourselves.

This is the very definition of grace. We receive a gift that we didn't know we needed, and like it or not, little by little, we'll be transformed into who we're called to be.

'Come to me...and I will give you rest' (11.28). It must have been a compelling invitation for the crowds in Galilee, burdened by poverty, hard work and oppressive taxation. It is a compelling invitation for anyone who is burdened – by sorrow; by sickness; by anxiety; by debt; by addiction; by discrimination; by our sins; perhaps even by our sense of religious obligation (23.4). All these burdens can be taken from us, Jesus says, if we will be yoked to him. And if that sounds like another burden, he reassures us that his yoke is easy to bear, and his load is not hard to carry." Thank you, Jesus, for setting the pace and showing us God's way. Amen.

Hymn Waymaker Michael W Smith

1. You are here, moving in our midst
I worship You, I worship You
You are here, working in this place
I worship You, I worship You

[Chorus] (You are)

Way maker, miracle worker
Promise keeper, light in the darkness
My God, that is who You are
Way maker, miracle worker
Promise keeper, light in the darkness
My God, that is who You are

2. You are here, touching every heart
I worship You, I worship You
You are here, turning lives around
I worship You, I worship You

[Chorus]

Way maker, miracle worker
Promise keeper, light in the darkness

My God, that is who You are
Way maker, miracle worker
Promise keeper, light in the darkness
My God, that is who You are
That is who you are
(That is who you are)
That is who you are
That is who you are
That is who you are

[Bridge]

Even when I can't see that you're working
even when I don't feel that you're working
You never stop, never stop working
You never stop, you never stop working

Even when I can't see that you're working
even when I don't feel that you're working
You never stop, you never stop working
You never stop, you never stop working

Even when I can't see that you're working
even when I don't feel that you're working
You never stop, you never stop working
You never stop, you never stop.
Way maker, miracle worker
Promise keeper, light in the darkness
My God, that is who You are
Way maker, miracle worker
Promise keeper, light in the darkness
My God, that is who You are
That is who You are

THE RESPONSE

Prayers of thanksgiving

We give thanks for God's love for us, and for all the good things he gives to us

Hymn StF 481: The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want (Townend)

**1. The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
he makes me lie in pastures green,
he leads me by the still, still waters,
his goodness restores my soul.
And I will trust in you alone,
and I will trust in you alone,
for your endless mercy follows me,
your goodness will lead me home.**

**2. He guides my ways in righteousness,
and he anoints my head with oil;
and my cup – it overflows with joy,
I feast on his pure delights.
And I will trust in you alone,
and I will trust in you alone,
for your endless mercy follows me,
your goodness will lead me home.**

**3. And though I walk the darkest path –
I will not fear the evil one,
for you are with me, and your rod and staff
are the comfort I need to know.
And I will trust in you alone,
and I will trust in you alone,
for your endless mercy follows me,
your goodness will lead me home.**

Prayers of intercession

We pray for the world, all that we hear about in the news. We pray for the Circuit and for Peter as he moves on and Iain as he prepares to join us. We pray for those we know and love in need of our prayer and for ourselves.

The Lord's Prayer

We say 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

We bring before God our offering and ask his blessing on all that we do

THE DISMISSAL

Hymn Great Things

**Come let us worship our King
Come let us bow at His feet
He has done great things
See what our Savior has done
See how His love overcomes
He has done great things
He has done great things**

**Oh hero of Heaven, You conquered the grave
You free every captive and break every chain
Oh God, You have done great things
We dance in Your freedom, awake and alive
Oh Jesus, our Savior, Your name lifted high
Oh God, You have done great things**

**You've been faithful through every storm
You'll be faithful forevermore
You have done great things
And I know You will do it again
For Your promise is "Yes and amen"**

**You will do great things
God, You do great things**

**Oh hero of Heaven, You conquered the grave
You free every captive and break every chain
Oh God, You have done great things
We dance in Your freedom, awake and alive
Oh Jesus, our Savior, Your name lifted high
Oh God, You have done great things**

**Hallelujah God, above it all
Hallelujah God, unshakable
Hallelujah, You have done great things
Hallelujah God, above it all
Hallelujah God, unshakable
Hallelujah, You have done great things
You've done great things**

**Oh hero of Heaven, You conquered the grave
You free every captive and break every chain
Oh God, You have done great things
We dance in Your freedom, awake and alive
Oh Jesus, our Savior, Your name lifted high
Oh God, You have done great things**

**You have done great things
Oh God, You do great things**

Phil Wickham

Prayer & blessing

Go and tell:
**God is gracious and merciful,
and full of love.
Go and live:
God's compassion embraces us all.
Go and give thanks:
God is faithful and blesses us. Amen.**

The blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit remain with us always.

Amen.