

Worship for 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Come now is the time to worship. You are all most welcome to join with others on this day. We give thanks to all who have been involved in putting this service together and to Malcolm Aldridge for the sermon on the theme of 'Wholehearted giving'.

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

Holy God you call us to this time, still our minds and gather our thoughts.

You are the giver of life in all its fullness, the giver of gifts beyond compare, the giver of more than we can imagine or comprehend.

As we come before you now let us open our hearts, our minds and our eyes to see you more clearly.

We ask this in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Hymn: StF 451 – Open the eyes of my heart, Lord

***Open the eyes of my heart, Lord,
open the eyes of my heart;
I want to see you, I want to see you.
Open the eyes of my heart, Lord,
open the eyes of my heart;
I want to see you, I want to see you.***

**To see you high and lifted up,
shining in the light of your glory.
Pour out your power and love;
as we sing holy, holy, holy.**

***Open the eyes of my heart, Lord,
open the eyes of my heart;
I want to see you, I want to see you.***

***Open the eyes of my heart, Lord,
open the eyes of my heart;
I want to see you, I want to see you.***

**To see you high and lifted up,
shining in the light of your glory.
Pour out your power and love;
as we sing holy, holy, holy.**

**Holy, holy, holy,
holy, holy, holy,
holy, holy, holy,
I want to see you.**

Paul Baloche

Psalm 106:1-5 (NIVUK)

¹Praise the Lord.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures for ever.

²Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord
or fully declare his praise?

³Blessed are those who act justly,
who always do what is right.

⁴Remember me, Lord, when you show favour to
your people,
come to my aid when you save them,

⁵that I may enjoy the prosperity of your chosen
ones,
that I may share in the joy of your nation
and join your inheritance in giving praise.

Opening Prayers

Father, Son and Holy Spirit one in three and
three in one.

As we come before you today we praise you for
who you are. The creator of all there is, for the

beauty of this world that you have given us.
Your love and goodness endure for ever and we
worship you for all your mighty acts and miracles
which we read in your Word and that cover
every aspect of life.

You are the light in our darkness,
the calm in our turmoil,
the meaning in our pointlessness,
the hope in our sadness
and the meaning in our being.

For all this and so much more we worship you.

Gracious God for all you have poured out upon
us

We give you thanks.

For your Word that has inspired and fed your
people, for those who had vision to record it,
skill to translate it and the presence to share it.

We give you thanks.

For your love that has surrounded and enfolded
us, that has given us joy, confirmed our faith,
nurtured our love and given us enduring hope in
the gift of the promise of eternal life.

We give you thanks.

To you be all praise and glory for ever and ever.
Amen.

Prayer of confession

You have given us so much,
forgive us for our lack of generosity,
for the things we have done and not done.
Forgive us for the things we have said and not
said.

Forgive us for the life we have lived and not
lived.

That we might reflect the image of Jesus in
thought, word and deed.

Forgive us and restore us.

Declaration of forgiveness

Thank you for the assurance that we are
forgiven, that you set us free to be the people
we are called to be.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

We say together 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

Hymn: StF 327 – Jesus is King and I will extol him

1. Jesus is King

and I will extol him,

give him the glory,

and honour his name;

he reigns on high,

enthroned in the heavens —

Word of the Father,

exalted for us.

2. We have a hope

that is steadfast and certain,

gone through the curtain

and touching the throne;

we have a priest

who is there interceding,

pouring his grace

on our lives day by day.

- 3. We come to him,
our Priest and Apostle,
clothed in his glory
and bearing his name,
laying our lives
with gladness before him —
filled with his Spirit
we worship the King:**
- 4. 'O Holy One,
our hearts do adore you;
thrilled with your goodness
we give you our praise!
Angels in light
with worship surround him,
Jesus, our Saviour,
for ever the same.**

Wendy Churchill

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Hebrews 9:24-28 (NRSVA)

²⁴For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵Nor was it to offer himself again and again, as the high priest enters the Holy Place year after year with blood that is not his own; ²⁶for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgement, ²⁸so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Mark 12:38-44 (NRSVA)

Jesus Denounces the Scribes

³⁸As he taught, he said, 'Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the market-places, ³⁹and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honour at banquets! ⁴⁰They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.'

The Widow's Offering

⁴¹He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴²A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. ⁴³Then he called his disciples and said to them, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. ⁴⁴For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.'

Sermon

Charitable giving has always been one of the cornerstones of the Methodist Church and indeed is vital to maintain Christian mission spreading the word of Christ and helping the poor and disadvantaged. At first sight it might seem that much of today's gospel reading is centred around giving but there are other equally important issues raised as well.

Firstly the hypocritical attitude of the religious leaders who flaunt their position by the style of their dress and the way that they display their self-importance. They give themselves the best seats in the synagogue and there is no doubt that they are law makers and law enforcers.

Then there is the attitude of those with power and authority who show off their own wealth when making Temple donations creating the illusion that they may be worth more in God's eyes than the poor and disadvantaged, in particular those of low status and wealth such as widows.

Finally the completely different attitude of the widow herself at the temple treasury whose offering is minuscule in comparison. However she is praised by Jesus as having the most generous and wholehearted attitude by giving her all regardless of how she will get by afterwards.

I thought therefore that rather than deal with each of these separate incidents it would be wise to look at the common strands that link them together. Straight off we can see that Jesus is highlighting the pitfalls of self-importance amongst wealthy people especially those in positions of authority. Alongside this there is a caution against assuming that serving and worshipping God is something that can be measured in monetary terms or indeed earned by observance of man-made rules.

This begs the question for us today as to how we might live out our faith in God without holding ourselves out as a shining example for all to see? Self-importance and abuse of power certainly have no place in our faith. Our attitude towards our fellow man needs to project generosity, love and respect. Giving to God often includes money but our attitude and wholeheartedness when we do this is important.

I was reflecting upon these principles when I picked up a newspaper cutting from a couple of weeks ago and started to read the various testimonies about Sir David Amess the murdered politician. Sir David was murdered in the course

of carrying out his duties to his constituents without concern for his own safety.

In particular I noticed a quotation from the Archbishop Stephen Cottrell, and I'll read out a part of this now; "it was Sir David's faith in Christ which was the source and sustenance of his vision and values. He wore his faith in his heart rather than on his sleeve." Surely the right attitude in Jesus' eyes and quite an accolade for any politician or person with a position of responsibility or authority. Tellingly quite the opposite of the way that scribes and Pharisees seemed to behave in our passage today.

Something here for all of us to bear in mind in today's world because every time someone does something to help or serve us, even though we might not realise it at the time, we too immediately become a person of authority. So although we might not have a title or letters after our name the principle is the same and our attitude towards God and our fellow man needs to measure up to the principles of our faith.

So when perhaps our gardener or odd-job man turns up to do a job for us we become their paymaster and they will generally do whatever we ask. When we walk in the local shop all the assistants have worked to unload and display food for us to choose from and they help serve us. When the refuse collector calls they generally take away what we leave out for them. We don't pay them directly but their job is to serve us.

Our attitude when we deal with such people is absolutely key and perhaps our concerns should not be how well they are doing their job but how we can help them to do their job easier and maybe better, but at the same time to feel valued and enjoy their time in our company. Our challenge is to serve them as Christians whilst they are serving us in their jobs.

But let's turn things on their head now and look at the opposite end of the scale which is the poor widow. In the time of Jesus, and before that, widows were generally regarded as powerless, poor and lowly people without their husbands. Their social status suffered further because people of wealth and authority would ride roughshod over them.

In today's world the social hierarchy may have changed a little but we have people who are industrious and have always been in the position of serving others but are still very hard up. There are also people who through ill-health or other drawbacks are either not able to be industrious or feel out of place in society.

If we are one of such people and it seems that the rest of the world is riding roughshod over us, I hope that the story of the widow reassures us that our faith in Jesus Christ exemplified by the way that we treat others will bring us his grace and all the love and support that we need.

So no matter what our status from top politician, head of state, industrial mega-millionaire to nurse, hospital orderly or lonely widow or widower on universal credit it is our faith in God and how we live it out that justifies but does not earn the love of Jesus Christ. It is what we can give to God, not necessarily in material terms but in loving and worshipping Jesus Christ freely, wholeheartedly and without limit that counts.

It is also living out our faith by softening our authority over others and taking on the cloak of humility and love in how we interact with our fellow man which fulfils the wishes of Jesus Christ for us. Even then we receive God's love through the grace of Jesus Christ.

So if at any time we are tempted into thinking that we have status above others then let us stop right there and remember Jesus'

appreciation of the poor widow. And if that is not enough let us also compare our position with that of Jesus, the personification of God himself, who despite having absolute authority over all things, came to serve the world and died that we might be forgiven. There is no comparison of course is there!?

Hymn: StF 566 – Take my life, and let it be

- 1. Take my life, and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee;
take my moments and my days,
let them flow in ceaseless praise.**
- 2. Take my hands, and let them move
at the impulse of thy love;
take my feet, and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee.**
- 3. Take my voice, and let me sing
always, only, for my King;
take my lips, and let them be
filled with messages from thee.**
- 4. Take my silver and my gold,
not a mite would I withhold;
take my intellect, and use
every power as thou shalt choose.**
- 5. Take my will, and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine;
take my heart — it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne.**
- 6. Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure-store;
take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee.**

Frances Ridley Havergal (1836–1879)

THE RESPONSE

Prayers of intercession

The hymn we have just sung is a very special one calling us to a life of discipleship and written by Frances Ridley Havergal and we shall use it as our inspiration for our prayers of intercession.

Let us pray.

We come to you Lord and ask you to take us just as we are, that we will consecrate our lives to you, for you to use.

Loving God, we remember those close to us, our friends and family, the people we cherish most.

We offer their needs, their worries, their concerns to you.

Help us as we use our hands and voices to reach out to them

Lord, show us how to act with love.

Loving God, we remember your world – people far away and in very different circumstances to us, people without the luxury of meeting in comfort to worship you.

People without food, shelter, support or peace.

Help us to give generously of our time and money.

Lord, show us how to act with love.

Loving God, we remember those affected by conflict today – the wars that are still going on, and those carrying physical and mental scars from wars long finished.

Amongst the pain, the uncertainty, the violence, we pray for your peace.

Lord, show us how to act with love.

This morning we especially lift to you the climate change conference COP26. May all those meeting together put the needs of the world first and be determined not just to talk but to act.

Lord, show them how to act with love and for the benefit of mankind.

Finally, loving God, we take a moment to pray for ourselves. Show us how to be those that respond to your offer of grace,

help us to be good neighbours to those we find ourselves alongside.

As we remember our act of worship today Lord, show us how to grow more in tune with you, and act with your love for your world. May we 'be ever only all for thee'.

In the name of the Creator, the Christ, and the Spirit we pray.

Amen

The Offering & prayer

We thank you for all your grace to us Lord God, for the many blessings we have received.

In this moment we commit ourselves to you again

to respond to grace with grace,
to love with love.

Help us to use our gifts to love our neighbour as ourselves. In Jesus' name.

Amen.

THE DISMISSAL

Hymn: StF 446 – I will offer up my life

1. I will offer up my life

**in spirit and truth,
pouring out the oil of love
as my worship to you.**

**In surrender I must give my every part;
Lord, receive the sacrifice
of a broken heart.**

*Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring
to so faithful a friend, to so loving a
King?*

*Saviour, what can be said, what can be
sung*

*as a praise of your name
for the things you have done?*

*O, my words could not tell, not even in
part,
of the debt of love that is owed by this
thankful heart.*

2. You deserve my every breath
for you've paid the great cost;
giving up your life to death,
even death on a cross.
You took all my shame away,
there defeated my sin,
opened up the gates of heaven,
and have beckoned me in. .

*Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring
to so faithful a friend, to so loving a
King?*

*Saviour, what can be said, what can be
sung*

*as a praise of your name
for the things you have done?*

*O, my words could not tell, not even in
part,
of the debt of love that is owed by this
thankful heart.*

Matt Redman (b. 1974)

Prayer & blessing

Guide us Lord as we seek to respond to your love
to us.

Help us to be a shining example of love in a
world crying out in need.

May we be Christ's hands and feet in the power
of your Spirit.

Amen.

Creator God you are Lord of all time and space.

You are present here and now, in this moment.

We go out into the days ahead to encounter
more of you, our God.

Amen.

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StF 451 – Open the eyes of my heart, Lord

Paul Baloche

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StF 327 – Jesus is King and I will extol him

Wendy Churchill

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StF 446 – I will offer up my life

Matt Redman (b. 1974)

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StF 566 – Take my life, and let it be

Frances Ridley Havergal (1836–1879)

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NIV

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