

Worship for 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Welcome to worship with the South Warwickshire Methodist Circuit. Wherever you have come from, however you have found us: you are most welcome.
We are grateful to many people for this week's service: Rev Elizabeth Clark who gives us the word; Rev Richard Wilde and Trevor Barr who are our readers; Rev Dr Iain Ballard who chose the hymns and Candy Evans and Gail Bullivant (that's me) for our prayers.
If you would like to take part, then please get in touch with the Circuit Office on 07578 640013 or swc.katetennyson@gmail.com

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created.

Hymn: StF 48 – From the highest of heights to the depths of the sea

**1. From the highest of heights to the depths of the sea,
creation's revealing your majesty.
From the colours of fall to the fragrance of spring,
every creature unique in the song that it sings,
all exclaiming:**

***Indescribable, uncontainable,
you placed the stars in the sky
and you know them by name.
You are amazing, God,
all powerful, untameable.
Awestruck we fall to our knees***

***as we humbly proclaim,
you are amazing, God.***

**2. Who has told every lightning bolt where it should go
or seen heavenly storehouses laden with snow?
Who imagined the sun and gives source to its light
yet conceals it to bring us the coolness of night?
None can fathom.**

***Indescribable, uncontainable,
you placed the stars in the sky
and you know them by name.***

***You are amazing, God,
all powerful, untameable.
Awestruck we fall to our knees
as we humbly proclaim,
you are amazing, God.***

Prayer of approach

Father God with you the first will be last and the last will be first
In your grace none will be left behind or underpaid, undervalued or in need
Through your Son Jesus Christ we all know that we are blessed
Created by you and loved by you.

Prayer of adoration

Lord we are born to sing your praises
With our hearts and voices raised
Today we worship together
For you alone God are worthy to be praised.

We praise the one who created us
Who created the world we share
Heaven and earth are full of your glory
Let creation praise you everywhere

Our hearts will always sing a song of praise
For God's Spirit is poured out among us
Through Jesus he made all things new
With us he shares in everything we do

At the beginning and end of the day
We praise the one God
Who reigns in glory through his Son
All his people shall sing his praise.
Now and for evermore.

Amen.

Prayer of confession

Father God we sometimes become full of our
own self importance
Self-importance can lead us to become selfish
and believe that we know best
We convince ourselves that we are better, more
worthy than other people
Through worldly values we can be lured away
from your values

Jesus taught, the first will be last and the last will
be first
He taught that those who humble themselves
will be exalted
And those who exalt themselves will be humbled

Father God we bring before you those times
when we have not treated others as we should
When we have misused our position or power to
keep others downtrodden

May we hear your Word afresh today
May we know anew today that in your Kingdom
all are equal
All are loved by you

Help us to follow your great commandment to
love you with all our hearts and souls and minds,
And to love others as we love ourselves.

Father God we bring our prayers of confession
before you now
With humble hearts asking for guidance that
your will
And not ours shall be done.

And rest in the knowledge that our sins are
forgiven
Through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ,
whose rose again.

Amen.

Hymn: StF 447 – Jesus be the centre

**1. Jesus, be the centre,
be my source, be my light,
Jesus**

**2. Jesus, be the centre,
be my hope, be my song,
Jesus**

*Be the fire in my heart,
be the wind in these sails;
be the reason that I live,
Jesus, Jesus.*

**3. Jesus, be my vision,
be my path, be my guide,
Jesus.**

*Be the fire in my heart,
be the wind in these sails;
be the reason that I live,
Jesus, Jesus.*

**4. Jesus, be the centre,
be my source, be my light,
Jesus**

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

1st Reading Jonah 3:10 – 4: 11

¹⁰Then God saw what they did and how they
turned from their evil ways, he relented and did
not bring on them the destruction he had
threatened. ^{4.1}But to Jonah this seemed very
wrong, and he became angry. ²He prayed to the
Lord, "Isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still
at home? That is what I tried to forestall by
fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a
gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger
and abounding in love, a God who relents from

sending calamity. ³Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

⁴But the Lord replied, “Is it right for you to be angry?”

⁵Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. ⁶Then the Lord God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. ⁷But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered.

⁸When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah’s head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, “It would be better for me to die than to live.”

⁹But God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?” “It is,” he said. “And I’m so angry I wish I were dead.”¹⁰But the Lord said, “You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. ¹¹And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?”

Psalm Psalm 71: selected verses

REFRAIN:

My tongue will proclaim your righteousness.

In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge; let me never be ashamed.

In your righteousness, deliver me and set me free; incline your ear to me and save me.

My tongue will proclaim your righteousness.

Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe; you are my crag and my stronghold.

Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the clutches of the evildoer and the

oppressor.

My tongue will proclaim your righteousness.

For you are my hope, O Lord God, my confidence since I was young.

I have been sustained by you ever since I was born; from my mother's womb you have been my strength; my praise shall be always of you.

My tongue will proclaim your righteousness.

My mouth shall recount your mighty acts and saving deeds all day long; though I cannot know the number of them.

I will begin with the mighty works of the Lord God; I will recall your righteousness, your alone.

O God, you have taught me since I was young, and to this day I tell of your wonderful works.

My tongue will proclaim your righteousness.

Hymn: Everyday God (Bernadette Farrell)

**Earth's creator, Everyday God,
Loving Maker, O Jesus,
You who shaped us, O Spirit,
Recreate us, Come, be with us.**

**In your presence, Everyday God,
We are gathered, O Jesus,
You have called us, O Spirit,
To restore us, Come, be with us.**

**Life of all lives, Everyday God,
Love of all loves, O Jesus,
Hope of all hopes, O Spirit,
Light of all lights, Come, be with us.**

**In our resting, Everyday God,
In our rising, O Jesus,
In our hoping, O Spirit,
In our waiting, Come, be with us.**

**In our dreaming, Everyday God,
In our daring, O Jesus,
In our searching, O Spirit,
In our sharing, Come, be with us.**

**God of laughter, Everyday God,
God of sorrow, O Jesus,
Home and shelter, O Spirit,
Strong and patient, Come, be with us.**

**Way of freedom, Everyday God,
Star of morning, O Jesus,...
Timeless healer, O Spirit,
Flame eternal, Come, be with us.**

**Word of gladness, Everyday God,
Word of mercy, O Jesus,
Word of friendship, O Spirit,
Word of challenge, Come, be with us.**

**Gentle father, Everyday God,
Faithful brother, O Jesus,
Tender sister, O Spirit.
Loving mother, Come, be with us.**

**Our beginning, Everyday God,
Our unfolding, O Jesus,
Our enduring, O Spirit,
Journey's ending, Come, be with us.**

**Alleluia, Everyday God,
Now and always, O Jesus,
Alleluia, O Spirit,
Through all ages, Come, be with us.**

Epistle Philippians 1:21-30

(New Revised Standard Version)

²¹For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. ²²If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me; and I do not know which I prefer. ²³I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; ²⁴but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. ²⁵Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, ²⁶so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

²⁷Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see

you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. ²⁹For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well— ³⁰since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Gospel Matthew 20:1-16

(New Revised Standard Version)

The Labourers in the Vineyard

^{20:1}“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ²After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. ³When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; ⁴and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. ⁵When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. ⁶And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, ‘Why are you standing here idle all day?’ ⁷They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard.’ ⁸When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.’ ⁹When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. ¹⁰Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. ¹¹And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, ¹²saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ ¹³But he replied to one of them,

'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? ¹⁴Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. ¹⁵Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' ¹⁶So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Sermon

Jonah 3:10-4:11 Matthew 20: 1-16

'It's not fair' – how often have we heard that phrase hurled in anger, perhaps we have shouted it ourselves in anger or despair. With three children growing up in our house I have lost count of the times I heard that phrase. They all said it at different times so maybe we got things about right.

When we hear this parable of Jesus our first reaction can well be, this is not fair, we feel for those hired first and their sense of injustice. Imagine you have worked all day in the hot sun, hard manual labour. As you are working others come and join you; even an hour before sun down new faces appear. Imagine the relief when you can down tools and line up for your pay. Those taken on last are at the head of the queue and they receive a day's wages, a whole day for on hours work.

The news spreads down the line, perhaps those at the back will get a bonus a bit extra for all their hard work. You begin to get impatient waiting for your turn you arrive in front of the steward, hold out your hand and get – a day's wage – same as everyone else. It's not fair!

Jonah also found things to be unfair. The reluctant prophet who eventually goes to Nineveh as God wants, here he has the most amazing success. He preaches of the need for the people to repent and make a new beginning and they do. The whole city turns their lives around. Is he delighted, no he isn't! Jonah considered

these people unworthy of God's love and attention, and here they are receiving not judgement as he thinks they should, but compassion.

God decides to teach Jonah another lesson and so we have this lovely story of the vine. If Jonah imperfect as he is, can care about this vine, then how much more will God care about the people he has created.

These two passages challenge the way we see both God and others and maybe sometimes ourselves. The vineyard owner's comment gives us one clue when he says, 'Don't I have the right to do what I like with my money; or are you envious because I am generous.'

We see a similar discussion with God and Jonah. Jonah complains that he knew God was 'gracious, merciful, and slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love'. Which is why he didn't want to preach to Nineveh and see God forgive the people.

How do these passages speak to us today? Covid has changed the way we see so many things. We have realised afresh how much we need each other, those often overlooked are now seen as key workers. We have perhaps, a renewed idea of what is important, people and relationships rather than things.

We have all, I suspect felt the need to be loved in the difficult times; to remember the perfect love that God has for each of us. A love that is not limited to those like us but there for everyone even those we feel might not deserve it. Quite a challenge isn't it?

Remember today and everyday how much God loves you and me and everyone, then let us pray for the grace to live out that truth. Amen

THE RESPONSE

Hymn: StF 255 – The kingdom of God

- 1. The kingdom of God
is justice and joy,
for Jesus restores
what sin would destroy;
God's power and glory
in Jesus we know,
and here and hereafter
the kingdom shall grow.**
- 2. The kingdom of God
is mercy and grace,
the prisoners are freed,
the sinners find place,
the outcast are welcomed
God's banquet to share,
and hope is awakened
in place of despair.**
- 3. The kingdom of God
is challenge and choice,
believe the good news,
repent and rejoice!
His love for us sinners
brought Christ to his cross,
our crisis of judgement
for gain or for loss.**
- 4. God's kingdom is come,
the gift and the goal,
in Jesus begun,
in heaven made whole;
the heirs of the kingdom
shall answer his call,
and all things cry glory
to God all in all!**

Prayers of intercession

Let's pray

As it says in the Psalm set for today,
*The Lord is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.*

But it doesn't always feel like that when we're pondering our lives and the week's news. It can be difficult to see your hand at work sometimes.

But thank you that you already know the needs of your world better than we ever can.

The news is full of fear, illness, confusion and change. People forced to leave their place of security, whether mentally or physically. We bring all these crises to you.

Remind us of your presence and your care for your world in all its joy and pain.

Give wisdom to those in authority and comfort and strength to all who feel they have no voice. And show us where we can make a difference.

Here in South Warwickshire we thank you for Iain, Sarah, Miriam and Joel who officially join us this month. Bless them as they settle in. Help us make our county a great place for them to live and grow.

We remember the many people and organisations beginning again this month, whether it's at school, college, re-opening businesses or in other ways. Be close to them as they tackle new challenges.

And in a few moments of quiet we bring to you those who are suffering in any way. Perhaps their plans have been laid aside, they are unwell or grieving in some other way. We ask for your comfort.

And we pray for ourselves.

When we feel unsettled, be our stability
When we feel overwhelmed, be our saviour
And when we feel your presence, help us share it with others

As we dedicate ourselves to you for another week.

The Lord's Prayer

Shall we say 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 us 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 for ever.
Amen**

THE DISMISSAL

Hymn: StF 130 – We Plough the Fields and Scatter

**1. We plough the fields, and scatter
the good seed on the land,
but it is fed and watered
by God's almighty hand:
he sends the snow in winter,
the warmth to swell the grain,
the breezes, and the sunshine,
and soft, refreshing rain.**

*All good gifts around us
are sent from heaven above;
then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord,
for all his love.*

**2. He only is the maker
of all things near and far;
he paints the wayside flower,
he lights the evening star;
the winds and waves obey him,
by him the birds are fed;
much more to us, his children,
he gives our daily bread.**

*All good gifts around us
are sent from heaven above;
then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord,
for all his love.*

**3. We thank you then, O Father,
for all things bright and good,
the seed-time and the harvest,
our life, our health, our food.
Accept the gifts we offer
for all thy love imparts,
and, what you most desire,
our humble, thankful hearts.**

*All good gifts around us
are sent from heaven above;
then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord,
for all his love.*

Prayer & blessing

As our service comes to a close, shall we say together the words of the grace:

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all, ever more.
Amen**