

Worship for 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Good morning and welcome to worship with the South Warwickshire Methodist Circuit. You are most welcome whether you are joining us from your own home or enjoying a break away. Whoever or wherever you are, all are welcome. Many people have been involved in the production of today's service. Russell Blackwell has chosen the hymns; Ann Howe and Sam McBratney are the readers; Julie Gardner is our preacher; Barbara Greenwood and Margaret Weir (that's me!) will lead our prayers. Kate Tennyson and Tim Pearson are the clever people who put it all together. Thank you all. If you would like to take part, then please get in touch with the Circuit Office on swc.katetennyson@gmail.com

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say I am?"
Come, claim Peter's reply as your own.
Come, and acknowledge the Messiah.
Come, and worship the Son of the living God.

Hymn: StF 52 – He is exalted

**He is exalted,
the King is exalted on high,
I will praise him.
He is exalted,
forever exalted
and I will praise his name!
He is the Lord,
forever his truth shall reign.
Heaven and earth
rejoice in his holy name.
He is exalted,
the King is exalted on high**

Prayer of approach

The Lord blessed Simon because he finally understood who Jesus was.
He called him Peter, and said that great things would come to pass through him.
He promised him the keys to the kingdom.

Lord, we already have so many keys on our keyrings.

Help us to find the right ones
To open the doors you choose for us.
Make us ready to be like Simon
and to become Peter,
doing great things in your strength
And for your kingdom.

Amen

Prayer of adoration

Lord God, we come before you in humble adoration.
How blessed are we that the one who holds the keys to the kingdom of heaven is the one who has the key to our hearts.
Thank you, God, for the privilege of being part of the amazing story of faith that sustained our ancestors.
Thank you, God, that we know our future is safe with you.

Amen

Prayer of confession

Living God, we confess that our lives are not always ones of living sacrifice, but that more often we are bounded by conditions of our own making about how far we will go to live out our faith.

Forgive us for our lack of boldness.

We confess that we do not always mirror your hopes of what your church will be, that we do

not accept difference or change easily, that we only want to recognise each others' gifts if they are ones we want to receive.

Forgive us for our lack of openness.

We confess that our world could be a much better place and that we could play our part in making it so. We do not challenge assumptions that injustice is inevitable and do not value the small things we can do to make a difference.

Forgive us for our lack of urgency.

God, the giver of life,
we offer our lives back to you.
Forgive us, change us and renew us.
In the name of Christ,
Amen

Declaration of forgiveness

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.
This is his gracious word,
'Your sins are forgiven.'

Amen. Thanks be to God.

Hymn: StF 644 – When our confidence is shaken

- 1. When our confidence is shaken
in beliefs we thought secure;
when the spirit in its sickness
seeks but cannot find a cure:
God is active in the tensions
of a faith not yet mature.**
- 2. Solar systems, void of meaning,
freeze the spirit into stone;
always our researches lead us
to the ultimate Unknown:
faith must die, or come full circle
to its source in God alone.**
- 3. In the discipline of praying,
when it's hardest to believe;
in the drudgery of caring,
when it's not enough to grieve;
faith, maturing, learns acceptance
of the insights we receive.**

**4. God is love; and he redeems us
in the Christ we crucify:
this is God's eternal answer
to the world's eternal why;
may we in this faith maturing
be content to live and die!**

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

1st Reading Exodus 1:8-2:10

(New International Version)

⁸Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt. ⁹'Look,' he said to his people, 'the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. ¹⁰Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.' ¹¹So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labour, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. ¹²But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites ¹³and worked them ruthlessly. ¹⁴They made their lives bitter with harsh labour in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labour, the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly. ¹⁵The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, ¹⁶'When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live.' ¹⁷The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. ¹⁸Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, 'Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?' ¹⁹The midwives answered Pharaoh, 'Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive.' ²⁰So God was kind to the midwives and the

people increased and became even more numerous. ²¹And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own. ²²Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: 'Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.'

The birth of Moses

^{2:1}Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, ²and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. ³But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. ⁴His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.

⁵Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the river-bank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. ⁶She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. 'This is one of the Hebrew babies,' she said.

⁷Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?'

⁸'Yes, go,' she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. ⁹Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you.' So the woman took the baby and nursed him. ¹⁰When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, 'I drew him out of the water.'

Psalms Psalm 124

(New International Version)

A song of ascents. Of David.

¹If the Lord had not been on our side –
let Israel say –

²if the Lord had not been on our side
when people attacked us,

³they would have swallowed us alive
when their anger flared against us;
⁴the flood would have engulfed us,
the torrent would have swept over us,
⁵the raging waters
would have swept us away.

⁶Praise be to the Lord,
who has not let us be torn by their teeth.

⁷We have escaped like a bird
from the fowler's snare;
the snare has been broken,
and we have escaped.

⁸Our help is in the name of the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.

Epistle Romans 12:1-8

(New International Version)

A living sacrifice

¹Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. ²Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Humble service in the body of Christ

³For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give

generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Gospel *Matthew 16:13-20*

(New International Version)

Peter declares that Jesus is the Messiah

¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?'

¹⁴They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'

¹⁵'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?'

¹⁶Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.'

¹⁷Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' ²⁰Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Sermon

We read in Matthew 16:13-16: When Jesus had come into the districts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" They said, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." He said to them, "And you--who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

This passage is very significant as it is written in all 3 Gospels, all Gospels telling its own version of Peter's answer:

In Matthew - "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

In Mark (8:29) – “You are the Messiah”

In Luke (9:20) – “God’s Messiah”

So why was it so important for Jesus to know how His disciples really thought who He was? Jesus was aware that His time on earth would be short and He needed as much time as possible to make it clear to His disciples, His mission and what that involved. Remember the disciples would be the first people to begin the early church and continue His great works to the ends of the earth.

According to the commentator, William Barclay it was interesting that they all withdrew to the districts of Caesarea Philippi because it was made up of a mainly non-Jewish population and Jesus would have had peace to teach the disciples there. Caesarea Philippi was about 25 miles north-east of the Sea of Galilee and so again travelling this distance shows the importance of Jesus Mission. Jesus was concerned to know who did recognise Him? and who would continue His work after He was gone? He needed to know that His 12 really understood who He was and to do that He had to test them?

This test however is not out of date, it applies to us today as Jesus followers as well. If Jesus asked you “Who do you say that I am?”, are you wholeheartedly ready to answer. I don't mean to just call out who He is, but that in our hearts we truly know who He is? That our lives our mirrored by our deeds and actions and show others around us that we do know who Jesus is!

This Pandemic has actually been an opportunity for us all to show others that we do know who Jesus is. Neighbours have begun to make time for one another, whereas before we just passed one another on the street. Many people are watching services online, whereas before they didn't make time to go to Church. In general, people have been kinder towards one another.

Perhaps this is God’s way of stripping away the things that distract us in our lives and present us with the opportunities to focus on loving one another. Afterall, that is what we should be doing!

When Jesus tested the disciples, He gently begins by finding out who others say He is. In verse 14 it reads “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah, and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” By some saying Elijah, this spoke volumes in how the Disciples thought about Jesus as the were saying that Jesus was as great as the Old Testament prophets. They also thought that Jesus was the forerunner of the Messiah. “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes” (Malachi 4:5).

At this point, after hearing the verdicts of the crowd, Jesus tests the disciples...” But what about you?” “Who do you say I am?” he asked. Jesus needs an answer that shows understanding. If we were to reflect on this question ourselves, how would you answer? Well I guess for the disciples this was one of those moments when you go quiet and do not say anything because you are afraid to get it wrong. I am sure we have all been in one of those situations, they can be quite awkward, you may even begin to sweat, roll the eyes, all signs of our body language showing we may be uncomfortable with the question.

Peter comes to the rescue, the disciple who denies knowing Jesus 3 times In Luke 22 v54-62. He shows Jesus understanding by answering in Matthew 16 v16 “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Peter confesses that he knows exactly who Jesus is. This answer must have given Jesus reassurance that at least someone recognises who He is and the body of Christ – the Church is safe.

The verdict of the crowd and Peter’s answer teaches us that when we answer Jesus question

“Who do you say I am?”, its not giving an answer that show we know the great prophets that have come before Jesus but it is about knowing who He is. Are you able today, to say hand on heart that you know who Jesus Christ is? That you have that wonderful personal relationship with Him that allows Him to be in your every thought, word and action.

During this Pandemic has given me the opportunity to read many books. One book that I have read is by Bobby Schuller called ‘You are beloved’. Within this book it explains how God loves us. When was the last time you were told that God loves you? If you have to think about this it probably suggests that we have neglected this fact and in sharing it with others. Bobby Schuller developed a creed, called the ‘Creed of the Beloved’ and you know when I read this, I couldn’t get away from how powerful these words were. So when most of us were displaying rainbows in our windows during Lockdown, I took this time as an opportunity to display this creed. I stopped Bin men, Postmen and passers-by from their tasks as they took a few moments to read it. My neighbours commented positively about it as well. I would like to share that creed with you now...



I hope today you can say “I am the beloved of God. It’s who I am”. I know this creed has given

me comfort and certainty in the uncertain times we are living in.

Just as Peter knows who Jesus is and that he is the beloved of God, Jesus replies in v17 "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of heaven, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

In Greek the name for Peter is 'Petros' and the name for rock is 'Petra'. Peter was given the task to build the Church. Peter is the first stone of this foundation and as Christians we continue to add to the Church of Christ.

In the week ahead, hopefully you will find opportunities to tell God and others who He is and to share about how much God loves each one of us.

Amen.

Hymn: StF 322 – How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

- 1. How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
in a believer's ear!
It soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds,
and drives away our fear.**
- 2. It makes the wounded spirit whole,
and calms the troubled breast;
'tis manna to the hungry soul,
and to the weary, rest.**
- 3. Dear name – the rock on which I build,
my shield and hiding-place,
my never-failing treasury, filled
with boundless stores of grace!**
- 4. Jesus! My Shepherd, Brother, Friend,
my Prophet, Priest, and King,
my Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
Accept the praise I bring.**

- 5. Weak is the effort of my heart,
and cold my warmest thought;
but when I see thee as thou art,
I'll praise thee as I ought.**
- 6. Till then I would thy love proclaim
with every fleeting breath;
and may the music of thy name
refresh my soul in death.**

THE RESPONSE

Prayers of thanksgiving

Gracious God,
For all that you have taught us, through scripture read and expounded, through prayers uttered and unexpressed, we thank you. For the many ways in which we have blessed and sustained us, we thank you. For your goodness, mercy, comfort and grace, we thank you in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Hymn: StF 633 – My soul finds rest in God alone

- 1. My soul finds rest in God alone,
my rock and my salvation;
a fortress strong against my foes,
and I will not be shaken.
Though lips may bless and hearts may curse,
and lies like arrows pierce me,
I'll fix my heart on righteousness,
I'll look to him who hears me.**

*O praise him, hallelujah,
my delight and my reward;
everlasting, never failing,
my Redeemer, my God.*
- 2. My soul find rest in God alone
amid the world's temptations;
when evil seeks to take a hold
I'll cling to my salvation.
Though riches come and riches go,
don't set your heart upon them;
the fields of hope in which I sow
are harvested in heaven.**

***O praise him, hallelujah,
my delight and my reward;
everlasting, never failing,
my Redeemer, my God.***

- 3. I'll set my gaze on God alone
and trust in him completely;
with every day pour out my soul
and he will prove his mercy.
Though life is but a fleeting breath,
a sigh too brief to measure,
my King has crushed the curse of death
and I am his forever.**

***O praise him, hallelujah,
my delight and my reward;
everlasting, never failing,
my Redeemer, my God.***

Prayers of intercession

We pray to God the Father, in the name of God the Son, and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

O God, we pray for your Church throughout the world – scattered because of the pandemic, yet united in heart, mind and spirit. Keep us safe until we can meet again.

The Lord hears our prayer,

Thanks be to God

O God, we pray for our local communities. For those working to maintain essential services, leisure and business. For children and parents, coping with a very different summer holiday. For those who are impatient to return to normal, and those who are nervous of any such thing.

The Lord hears our prayer,

Thanks be to God

O God, we pray for our families, friends and neighbours, especially those struggling with the pressures of life. We think of those from whom we have been separated for too long; those we would like to hug, but are told we cannot; we ask you to hold us and them in your unending love.

The Lord hears our prayer,

Thanks be to God

O God, we pray for the sick in body mind or spirit. We remember those whose diagnosis or treatment have been delayed because of coronavirus, and those whose mental health has suffered through this time. May they find the specialised care they need; may they know the love and support of family and friends.

The Lord hears our prayer,

Thanks be to God

O God, we pray for the world: for the people of Beirut, struggling to recover from the effects of the massive explosion there; for the people of Yemen, battered by war, famine and disease; for victims of flood and storm. We pray for all in positions of authority and influence – that they may be people of good will and of wisdom, motivated and empowered to support all the people of their countries and regions.

The Lord hears our prayer,

Thanks be to God

O God, we pray for ourselves. Grant us grace to know you, courage to serve you, wisdom to share your love with all we meet.

The Lord hears our prayer,

Thanks be to God

We bring these prayers, and the silent prayers of our hearts, in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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

As you have blessed us, so we offer our service to you in the form of our gifts of money and of time. Receive and bless all that we bring, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen

THE DISMISSAL

Hymn: StF 363 – My Jesus my Saviour

**My Jesus, my Saviour,
Lord there is none like you.
All of my days I want to praise
the wonders of your mighty love.
My comfort, my shelter,
tower of refuge and strength,
let every breath, all that I am,
never cease to worship you.**

***Shout to the Lord all the earth, let us sing,
power and majesty, praise to the King.
Mountains bow down
and the seas will roar
at the sound of your name.
I sing for joy at the work of your hands.
Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand.
Nothing compares to the
promise I have in you.***

Prayer & blessing

Prayer

Gracious Lord, you know how much we enjoy studying about you. We love discovering more about what your teaching meant and how the kingdom of God was coming into the world through you. We find it fascinating to chronicle

the various ways people thought about you and why.

But, in the midst of our thinking about you, all of a sudden you confront us with the core question of life: "Who do you say I am?" By your grace, we have been able to answer that question. We say you are the Messiah, the one through whom God was beginning to reign on the earth. We say you are the best teacher of all, one whose truth we seek to understand and embrace. We say you are the Saviour, whose death brings life to us. We say you are the risen one "who triumphed o'er the grave." And we say that you are, indeed, the Word of God in the flesh, Emmanuel, God with us.

We can say all of these things, Lord. We believe them. But are we living them each day? Are we speaking and acting as if all of this is true? Help us, by your Spirit, to live each day in light of who you are, Lord Jesus. May our actions reflect our confession. To you be all the glory!

Amen.

Blessing

"The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace."