

A service for Sunday 19th July 2020

Bible Reading: Psalm 139

Hymn: O God, you search me and you know me https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEGc3_D19Vo

1. O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
When I walk or lie down, you are before me,
Ever the maker and keeper of my days.
2. You know my resting and my rising.
You discern my purpose from afar,
And with love everlasting you besiege me:
In ev'ry moment of life or death, you are.
3. Before a word is on my tongue, Lord,
You have known its meaning through and
through.
You are with me beyond my understanding:
God of my present, my past and future too.
4. Although your Spirit is upon me,
Still I search for shelter from your light.
There is nowhere on earth I can escape you:
Even the darkness is radiant in your sight.
5. For you created me and shaped me,
Gave me life within my mother's womb.
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you:
Safe in your hands, all creation is made new.

Prayers:

Let us pray together

Creator God, we gather in the knowledge and vision of your love.

In the Risen Christ, Jesus' disciples were filled with new hope and they saw that you called them to speak your message of renewal, commitment, forgiveness, and freedom. We thank you that you have called us to share that hope, even in the uncertainty that we often feel.

You dwell with us; your love enfolds us, and we find peace in your presence.

We thank you that Jesus brings new insights into the world and that through his life, death, and resurrection you continue to speak with us today. Jesus reached out his hands in healing, in friendship and in blessing; may we do the same in his name today.

We thank you that you continue to reach out into the life of the world; that in our deepest uncertainty you bring the certainty of your love; in the place of deepest darkness you bring your light and into our lives you bring your forgiveness.

Creator God, we pray that you continue to inform our compassion, be our vision and bring light, hope, and peace to us and to all the world.

Amen

Old Testament Reading

Genesis 28: 10-19a



This picture is of Calverley Methodist Chapel, the Church I attended as a child with my parents and my brother. It sits in the heart of the village of Calverley, midway between Leeds and Bradford, it is a beautiful building and holds precious memories for me. Sadly the Methodist people of Calverley don't worship in this lovely building any more, the membership has plummeted to forty four people with a similar worshipping congregation and they can no longer afford to maintain the building which is listed outside and in, the future looks bleak.

In the Genesis reading Jacob has an amazing experience of God and seems to believe that in the very place he finds himself, he is at the door to heaven, a Holy place, a special, this, to him is the place where God is found, for he says "how awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven" for Jacob, the place is important. I think that as I read this through my twenty first century lens that Jacob is somewhat missing the point. For me, the dream, the experience, the message that God is sharing, is perhaps more important than the place.

One the occasions that I drive through the village of Calverley, I always look at the Chapel in much the same way as I look at number 96 Woodhall Road, the house where I was born and lived until I married Karen in 1985. It will always be a special place for me, but I have seen God in many, many different places over the years. As we turn back to our Church buildings, we might recognise that for eighteen Sundays we haven't met in the usual way for worship and I think that prompts some serious questions.

Consider:

- *What have we lost by not being in the building together? How important is the building? Is the feeling of loss more to do with not being with the people?*
- *The worshipping congregation at Calverley has been meeting in the Sunday School, this has not been by choice. We might not have chosen for the last eighteen Sundays to look how they have, has it all been negative? What are the positives?*
- *How import is the place to you? Or is the experience of greater value?*

Hymn: **All my hope on God is founded** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DohxO6ytsaU>

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. All my hope on God is founded:
He doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance He guideth,
Only good and only true.
God unknown, He alone
Calls my heart to be His own.</p> <p>2. Pride of man and earthly glory,
Sword and crown betray his trust:
What with care and toil he buildeth,
Tower and temple fall to dust.
But God's power, hour by hour,
Is my temple and my tower.</p> | <p>3. God's great goodness aye endureth,
Deep His wisdom, passing thought:
Splendour, light and life attend Him,
Beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore from His store
Newborn worlds rise and adore.</p> <p>4. Still from man to God eternal
Sacrifice of praise be done,
High above all praises praising
For the gift of Christ His Son.
Christ doth call one and all:
Ye who follow shall not fall.</p> |
|--|--|

Epistle **Romans 8: 12-25**

The drive from Crackington Haven to Widemouth Bay near Bude in Cornwall is OK if you follow the main roads, if however you decide to go on the scenic route, you will find yourself on one of the more challenging roads in the country, with steep, single track roads and having to negotiate several hairpin bends. Stick to the main roads and life



is easier, but you will miss out on the stunning scenery as you descend into the picturesque hamlet of Millook. I have tackled this drive several times and each time it has scared the life out of me, and I have decided that one needs to either be brave or downright stupid.

Paul suffers for his faith, read through the Acts of the Apostles or through the epistles and you will see how much his faith cost him and the same can be said for the early apostles. Paul recognises in his letter to the Romans that life is never easy, there will always be a cost and sometimes that cost is hard to cope with, but for the Christian our hope is not based on the things we can see and experience in this life, but on things beyond, things unseen and beyond our

wildest dreams.

Driving from Crackington Haven to Widemouth Bay, one gets used to the scenery around you and then in a few yards of road a stunning panorama opens up in front of you and if like me, your breath is taken away and you just have to stop and capture the moment. Like Jacob in his special place, you have to stop, name the place, record the experience, and revisit it time and again just to recapture that moment.

Consider:

- *Does worship feel to be for us that experience in our lives? The breath-taking moment in our week when we see God, feel his presence, praise him for all that is past, and trust him for all that's to come?*

- *What are the components of worship that take us to that place? The hymns and songs we sing? The readings from scripture? The times of prayer? The Word clarified and made personal through preaching? The fellowship we share? The place where we do it?*
- *As you reflect on which components are most important to you, try to think about which you value the most and which you could live without if forced to do so.*

Take a time to sit quietly and pray:

We pray for the world around us; for the environment; for peace where there is conflict; for racial and social justice to be seen throughout the world.

We pray for our communities; for those who are shielding; for those who are fearful, for those working for the good of others in many different ways in our community. We pray for all who work in the NHS and for all key workers and those on whom we rely. We pray for our church community as we seek new ways of fulfilling our calling as the Church in these times. We pray for our families, friends, and neighbours. We pray for those who are ill and for those who are struggling financially or emotionally at this time. We pray for those who are grieving as we remember those who have died.

In the stillness we take a moment we bring our prayers to God...

The Lord's Prayer:

Hymn

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMuvGb7KDE8>

Father God, I wonder how I managed to exist
 Without the knowledge of Your parenthood and Your
 loving
 Care
 But now I am Your son, I am adopted in Your family
 And I can never be alone
 'Cause Father God, You're there beside me

I will sing Your praises
 I will sing Your praises
 I will sing Your praises
 Forever more
 I will sing Your praises
 I will sing Your praises
 I will sing Your praises
 Forever more

Gospel

Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43



When I carried out my research for my dissertation a few years ago, I asked the question “How Methodist is the Methodist Church?” my reasoning was that when I look back to my days back in Calverley, I believed that everybody who attended the chapel was a Methodist, however, my dad was brought up an anglican, and my mum’s history from her fathers side was a mix of Quaker and Salvationist, so I am ecumenical in many ways. Diane Smith in her thought for the day today, Wednesday 15th July <https://methodistic.org.uk/living-with-paradox/> reminds us that the Church lives every day with paradox, a variety of opinions, theologies and styles and we

either fight against that, wanting everybody to think the way we do, or we value the rich variety of styles we find and treasure within the Christian community.

As most of you know, I am no gardener and I view weeds as being the flowers God gifts to me, that I never planted, and over the years, I have come to quite love weeds. For the expert gardener or the farmer, they are a nuisance and an unwelcome imposter finding space in gardens and fields. As I read this scripture today, I see Jesus reminding the hearer that they must be tolerant of each other’s points of view, the healthy plants and the weeds grow up alongside each other and are strengthened by each other.

Diane reminds us in her Thought for the Day that paradox is a good thing and we can never be expected to always agree on everything. I always struggle with concept of good preachers and bad preachers, I know what I like, and it could be just a little too easy for me to assume that everybody else thinks the same as I do, but I know that isn’t the case. When any group comes together, we do so as a mish mash of likes and dislikes, and our strength is in our variety.

Consider:

- *We live in a world today when everything is tailor made to suit the individual. Play lists, watch what we want when we want, families where different members eat different foods at mealtimes. A lot of us will remember a “one size fits all” life. Is the range of choice better? Or worse? In your opinion.*

- *We have been used to a one size fits all Church in the past, recognising only that a sermon might not be suitable for the youngest. Would we prefer a more pick and mix approach? Is this possible? Or is it right that you turn up and take your chance?*
- *How good do you think the Church is at listening to other people, possibly those who feel that their only choice is to look elsewhere, or to stay away? Can we improve? Do we need to make changes? Or, do we stick to what we are doing, because that is what we want?*

Hymn: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5R9PmGf3aE>

1. Sing of the Lord's goodness, Father of all wisdom,
come to him and bless his name.
mercy he has shown us, his love is for ever,
faithful to the end of days.
*Come then all you nations, sing of your Lord's goodness,
melodies of praise and thanks to God.
Ring out the Lord's glory, praise him with your music,
worship him and bless his name.*
2. Power he has wielded, honour is his garment,
risen from the snares of death.
His word he has spoken, one bread he has broken,
new life he now gives to all.
Come then all you nations.....
3. Courage in our darkness, comfort in our sorrow,
Spirit of our God most high;
solace for the weary, pardon for the sinner,
splendour of the living God.
Come then all you nations.....
4. Praise him with your singing, praise him with the trumpet,
praise God with the lute and harp;
praise him with the cymbals, praise him with your dancing,
praise God till the end of days.
Come then all you nations.....

A prayer of blessing

Dear Lord.

When times are hard, walk beside us.

When we are unsure of which way to turn, dwell within us.

When we need to listen to others, encourage us.

When our lives and work bear fruit, rejoice with us.

So may the blessing of God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with us all today and forever more. Amen.