

## A service for Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2020

**Bible Reading:** Psalm 17: 1-7, 15

**Hymn: When the Music Fades** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=014Zv8grhio>

1. When the music fades  
All is stripped away  
And I simply come  
Longing just to bring  
Something that's of worth  
That will bless Your heart  
I'll bring You more than a song, for a song in  
itself  
Is not what You have required  
You search much deeper within through the  
way things appear  
You're looking into my heart  
  
*I'm coming back to the heart of worship  
And it's all about You, all about You, Jesus  
I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it  
When it's all about You, all about You, Jesus*
2. King of endless worth  
No one could express  
how much You deserve  
Though I'm weak and poor  
All I have is Yours, every single breath  
I'll bring You more than a song, for a song in  
itself  
Is not what You have required  
You search much deeper within through the  
way things appear  
You're looking into my heart  
  
*I'm coming back to the heart of worship  
And it's all about You, all about You, Jesus  
I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it  
When it's all about You, all about You, Jesus*

### **Prayers:**

Lord our God, you require truth in the inward parts. We do not wish to deceive but at times we are not honest with ourselves or honest with others. Take any deception, known or unknown and pour out your Spirit of truth. Today we receive your Holy Spirit and ask that as a cool glass of water, you will refresh and cleanse us today of all sin and duplicity. We give you thanks that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. This is his gracious word: 'your sins are forgiven.' **Amen.**

### **Old Testament Reading Genesis 32: 22-31**

My brother's project during lockdown has been to do some work on his house, the other week he decided to paint all the rendering over one weekend, which looked to be a quite precarious task, particularly over the top of the conservatory. He has now knocked the wall down between his dining room and kitchen and over the last few weeks we have heard the continuing saga of him laying laminate flooring in the new open plan kitchen and dining room. There are times when it pays to live in a manse, which means that I don't have to engage in such tiring and challenging pastimes.

Jacob wrestles all night long with this man, whom we interpret today to be God. Even when he has been struck on the hip and is in physical pain, still he struggles on, in the end God blesses him and changes his name to Israel, because he has struggled and prevailed. There was a view in the early times of Judaism that anybody who saw God would die, Moses sees God in the burning bush, but not in human form, Jacob see's God and struggles with him, yet in the end is alive!

### *Consider:*

- Once again, we are reminded that this journey through life is a journey of struggling and prevailing, reflect for a moment on tasks you have done that have taken patience, consumed, frustrated, challenged and even maybe left you at times feeling defeated, but the end result was worth the effort.
- *Thinking about your journey of faith, what are the things that tax, frustrate, and confuse you, maybe leaving you at times feeling as though you might give up. Maybe passages of scripture that challenge your understanding of faith, maybe the institution of the Church and some of its rules. How do you deal with these things?*
- *We are reminded in our opening hymn about the heart of worship, this is about God and our relationship with him/her. At times of struggle we come back to God in prayer.*

**Hymn:**            **O Love that wilt not let me go** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nt69WDtYNLo>

1. O love that wilt not let me go  
The story behind the hymn  
O Love that wilt not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in thee;  
I give thee back the life I owe,  
That in thine ocean depths its flow  
May richer, fuller be.
2. O light that followest all my way,  
I yield my flickering torch to thee;  
My heart restores its borrowed ray,  
That in thy sunshine's blaze its day  
May brighter, fairer be.
3. O Joy that seekest me through pain,  
I cannot close my heart to thee;  
I trace the rainbow through the rain,  
And feel the promise is not vain,  
That morn shall tearless be.
4. O Cross that liftest up my head,  
I dare not ask to fly from thee;  
I lay in dust life's glory dead,  
And from the ground there blossoms red  
Life that shall endless be.

**Epistle            Romans 9: 1-5**

In the autumn of 1979 Blue Peter, the children's television programme launched their first even Bring and Buy sale. Forty years on I can still remember Bryan Davison our Sunday School Superintendent gather all the Sunday School teachers together and enthusiastically suggested that we might host such an event at the Methodist Chapel, one by one colleague teachers argued why it was not a good idea, it would clash with our regular coffee mornings, there would be a huge amount of work for a few people to do and in the end it didn't happen, I came away quite frustrated, because even all those years ago, I believed that having an opportunity to welcome potentially hundreds of families into the Church could only be good.

We do well to remember that Paul, the great Christian evangelist was first and foremost a Jew and in this letter to the Romans he is agonising about the fact that the Jews, who have waited many lifetimes for the Messiah have not understood or engaged with the message of Christ. Paul appears in this passage to agonise that he loves the people but hates the crime that has caused Christ to be crucified. Paul believes that Christ's message is for the very people who despise him.

*Consider:*

- *Are there people you know and love, who you want to share your experiences of faith with, who don't really feel the need or don't want to know? How do you deal with that? How does it make you feel?*
- *Clearly the Jews in the day of Paul were not only indifferent to the Christian faith, they actively opposed it to the point of destroying those who thought differently to them. Does somebody have to attend Church to be a Christian? Or is it enough that they live a good life and are loving and caring?*
- *How do we share our faith with those who would never darken the doorstep of a Church? How often do we pray for the people who despise us because of what we believe? For those who feel completely different to the Christian faith, and for those who, like the Jews in the time of Paul are lost and we believe that a relationship with Christ is the answer.*

**Take a time to sit quietly and pray:**

Dear Father, I thank you for the ongoing work in my life. I know it will continue until you take me home.

Thank you for sins forgiven, for a life with you now, and a life with you in the hereafter.

We pray for the Methodist Church, nationally and worldwide.

We pray for the universal Church and the churches that have met through technological means during this time.

We pray for all those who have suffered loss in this present coronavirus situation.

We thank you for every act of kindness done during this time and all the imaginative ways that ministers and lay workers have used to keep in touch with their congregations.

We pray for those who are in need of healing, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Lord in your mercy, hear these prayers. Amen.

**The Lord's Prayer:**

**Hymn There's a wideness in Gods mercy** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kamADrIPEDs>

*From St Mary Le Tower Ipswich*

1. There's a wideness in God's mercy,  
like the wideness of the sea;  
there's a kindness in his justice  
which is more than liberty.
2. There is no place where earth's sorrows  
are more felt than up in heaven:  
there is no place where earth's failings  
have such kindly judgement given.
3. For the love of God is broader  
than the measure of our mind;  
and the heart of the eternal  
is most wonderfully kind.
4. But we make his love too narrow  
by false limits of our own;  
and we magnify his strictness  
with a zeal he will not own.
5. There is plentiful redemption  
in the blood that has been shed;  
there is joy for all the members  
in the sorrows of the head.
6. There is grace enough for thousands  
of new worlds as great as this;  
there is room for fresh creations  
in that upper home of bliss
7. If our love were but more simple  
we should take him at his word  
and our lives would be illumined  
by the presence of our Lord

**Gospel Matthew 14: 13-21**

With all the problems associated with the Coronavirus lockdown of recent weeks food banks and associated charities have been put under huge amounts of pressure and the response of ordinary men and women has made a huge difference, resulting in thousands of families being provided with food. Have we seen a modern-day miracle? There is certainly a school of thought that would suggest that once one young boy shared his lunch, it prompted others to do likewise and maybe that is a miracle in itself.

Remember that we worship the great creator God and if that is the case, he and he alone has the power and the desire to make something out of nothing. Certainly all four Gospel writers regard this as one of the most important miracles Christ performed, because in this one act, he proved to them that he was the God who had spoken the very world into being and I guess that my concern is, that if we try explain the miracle away as nothing more than an act of sharing, we run the risk of taking something away from the glory of God and the divinity of Christ.

*Consider:*

- *Jacob wrestles with God all night long, resulting in torment, fatigue, and physical pain, but he endures. Paul agonises about the Jews who simply do not want to believe and today we want to reason and explain things away. What do you see when you read again this familiar Gospel story? A great story? An example of people's generosity? Or evidence of Christ, God incarnate?*
- *In a world where everything needs to be evidenced, how do we share the Gospel story with those who have little or no faith? Harder still, how do we share with those who once had a faith, but have now lost it?*
- *Jesus clearly focusses in this story on people's practical needs, before starting to address their spiritual needs. Can you think of situations when you have seen that happening? Jesus didn't stop with the feeding of the body; he went on and fed their minds. Do we simply stop with the first part and forget the second?*

**\*\*Challenge\*\***

*These are tough questions and are questions the Church has been grappling with for many years. Stop for a moment and pray that God will inspire you to make a difference in our generation. If God speaks to you, share your thoughts with somebody else, he will have been speaking to others and one small germ of an idea can grow and make a difference. Let's work with God to feed the multitude today, physically and Spiritually.*

**Hymn: And can it be** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tu2uA6U4Fvg>

1. And can it be that I should gain  
An interest in the Saviour's blood?  
Died He for me, who caused His pain—  
For me, who Him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! How can it be,  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
2. He left His Father's throne above—  
So free, so infinite His grace—  
Emptied Himself of all but love,  
And bled for Adam's helpless race:  
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,  
For, O my God, it found out me!

3. Long my imprisoned spirit lay,  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray—  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

4. No condemnation now I dread;  
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;  
Alive in Him, my living Head,  
And clothed in righteousness divine,  
Bold I approach the eternal throne,  
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

**A prayer of blessing**

Power of God, be our protection;  
wisdom of God, be our guide;  
word of God, be our inspiration;  
shield of God, be our defence;  
hosts of God, be our deliverance;  
Son of God be our salvation;  
now and always. Amen