

## A service for Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2020

**Bible Reading:** Psalm 105: 1-6

**Hymn: Be still, for the presence of the Lord** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZugvUQ4m90U>

1. Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
The holy One, is here;  
Come bow before him now  
With reverence and fear  
In him no sin is found  
We stand on holy ground.  
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
The holy One, is here.
2. Be still, for the glory of the Lord  
Is shining all around;  
He burns with holy fire,  
With splendour he is crowned:  
How awesome is the sight  
Our radiant king of light!  
Be still, for the glory of the Lord  
Is shining all around.
3. Be still, for the power of the Lord  
Is moving in this place:  
He comes to cleanse and heal,  
To minister his grace -  
No work too hard for him.  
In faith receive from him.  
Be still, for the power of the Lord  
Is moving in this place.

### **Prayers:**

God of grace, I praise You. I praise You for who You are: creator, faithful, rescuer, and holy. I praise that You even though I cannot be with others to worship You, I can feel that You are here in my heart.

I praise You, for all the blessings You have given me. For family, for friends, for a relationship with You. Help me not to take You for granted.

God of grace, as I worship You this morning, help me to be transformed by Your love, and in the power of Your Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Old Testament Reading Genesis 37: 1-4, 12-28**

For a great many years Karen worked as a registered childminder and we learned very early on that there is no such thing as an average family anymore. During the twenty odd years that we welcomed a line of different children into our home we saw every conceivable variety of family life.

In Church life, we like to use familial names, we have talked about God as Father, for many years and for some, this is a helpful idea, reminding people of a positive experience, yet for others the title is a painful concept. We use "Mother" if we feel uncomfortable with the exclusivity of the Father figure, Local preachers' meetings of old referred to "sisters and brothers" as though the family unit is a positive experience.

Here in this very familiar Old Testament story we read about one of the most dysfunctional families imaginable, I always feel quite critical of Jacob, who appears to choose a favourite son and grant him preferential treatment, I tend to feel that the young Joseph is quite irritating and while I might condemn the brothers for their actions maybe it is understandable

*Consider:*

- *How helpful do you find the idea of faith being compared to family in such a way? Does the concept make you feel uncomfortable in any way?*
- *We talk about "family worship" what do you think we mean by this? Something for the children? Something that is all inclusive? Do you think that we ever really achieve "family worship" with something for all people? Is that even possible?*
- *There was a time when family life looked a bit like "one size fits all" is that true of the modern world? Whether we like it or not, the general trend in the modern world is not to do the things we don't want to do? What challenges does this throw up for Churches?*

**Hymn:**            **In an age of twisted values**    <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2GLXs0rNB4>

1. In an age of twisted values, we have lost the truth we need.  
In sophisticated language, we have justified our greed.  
By our struggle for possessions, we have robbed the poor and weak.  
Hear our cry and heal our nation; your forgiveness, Lord, we seek.
2. We have built discrimination on our prejudice and fear.  
Hatred swiftly turns to cruelty, if we hold resentments dear.  
For communities divided by the walls of class and race,  
hear our cry and heal our nation; show us, Lord, your love and grace.
3. When our families are broken, when our homes are full of strife,  
when our children are bewildered, when they lose their way in life,  
when we fail to give the aged all the care we know they need,  
hear our cry and heal our nation; help us show more love, we plead.
4. We who hear your word so often choose so rarely to obey.  
Turn us from our wilful blindness; give us truth to light our way.  
In the power of your Spirit come to cleanse us, make us new;  
hear our cry and heal our nation till our nation honours you.

**Epistle**            **Romans 10: 5-15**

In recent years, the Church has had to deal with aspects of our history that maybe don't make us very proud and this applies to all denominations, including the Methodist Church. Five years ago, the Methodist Church completed a review relating to how people involved in the life of the Church had been either victims or perpetrators of abuse and how the Church at the time dealt with it. In more recent times there has been much conversation relating to the "Black lives matter" issue and we might well say "but things were different in the past" and feel quite comfortable.

As St Paul writes to the church in Rome, he reminds them that the message of Christ is for all people everywhere. The problem the early Church had was the belief that to become like Christ, you must first become like us. That has been an opinion that has been held in the Church for many generations and as a result our missionaries set out to Anglicise people from other countries and it is only now that we are starting to realise the mistakes we made.

*Consider:*

- *How do you react to people of faith that hold different opinions to yours? Are you right and they are wrong? Why is it that you believe what you believe? Who was it that taught you those values?*
- *Some people will say "but the Bible is the only true way" look again at the Romans reading. No doubt there will be laws in the book of Deuteronomy that we all find easy to live by and other we know that we never can. Does that make them all right? Or all wrong? Or do we cherry pick which ones suit us?*
- *We might easily look at the book of Deuteronomy and accept that it was written thousands of years ago in a different culture and therefore conclude that it does not refer to the here and now and therefore some of the laws are irrelevant. Can we use the same logic to justify abuse? That too was in a different time frame does that make it right?*

*Once again, these are extremely difficult questions and ones that could bring pain to some and indifference to others, but in our faith, we need to grapple with these issues.*

#### **A time of prayer**

Almighty God, I come now to pray for Your world. Your world which is full of brokenness, injustice, and inequality. I bring before You the rulers of the world, local or national, and pray that they would remember that all power comes from You.

Almighty God, I pray for your church. I pray that during these times we would unite in worship and service. I pray for my local church, and its ministers/pastors, that they would be strengthened by Your Spirit.

Almighty God, I pray for those known to me and name them before You. And, I pray for myself, that I would be transformed by Your Spirit, and live in the love which You have given me through Jesus.

In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

## The Lord's Prayer:

Hymn Beauty for brokenness <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OaMPE53uP38>

1. Beauty for brokenness  
Hope for despair  
Lord, in their suffering  
This is our prayer  
Bread for the children  
Justice, joy, peace  
Sunrise to sunset  
Your kingdom increase!
2. Shelter for fragile lives  
Cures for their ills  
Work for the craftsman  
Trade for their skills  
Land for the dispossessed  
Rights for the weak  
Voices to plead the cause  
Of those who can't speak  
  
*God of the poor, friend of the weak  
Give us compassion we pray  
Melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain  
Come, change our love from a spark to a flame*
3. Refuge from cruel wars  
Havens from fear  
Cities for sanctuary  
Freedoms to share  
Peace to the killing-fields  
Scorched earth to green  
Christ for the bitterness  
His cross for the pain  
  
*God of the poor, friend of the weak  
Give us compassion we pray  
Melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain  
Come, change our love from a spark to a flame*
4. Rest for the ravaged earth  
Oceans and streams  
Plundered and poisoned  
Our future, our dreams  
Lord, end our madness  
Carelessness, greed  
Make us content with  
The things that we need  
  
*God of the poor  
Friend of the weak  
Give us compassion we pray  
Melt our cold hearts  
Let tears fall like rain  
Come, change our love  
From a spark to a flame*
5. Lighten our darkness  
Breathe on this flame  
Until your justice  
Burns brightly again  
Until the nations  
Learn of your ways  
Seek your salvation  
And bring you their praise  
  
*God of the poor  
Friend of the weak  
Give us compassion we pray  
Melt our cold hearts  
Let tears fall like rain  
Come, change our love  
From a spark to a flame*

## Gospel Matthew 14: 22-33

It is well over fifty years since my dad taught me to ride a bike, there was a road along to the mill close to where we used to live, there was no traffic on the road on a Saturday afternoon and so my dad held onto the back of the saddle and ran behind me holding on and I felt safe so long as he was behind me keeping the bike stable (he never believed in stabilizers) we went back and forth and on one of the journeys he made the mistake of shouting "good lad, keep peddling" I realised that his voice was much further away than directly behind me and I wobbled and fell off.

This is a wonderful Bible story and reading it, you might think that it is about the lack of faith Peter has, like me riding the bike, he is managing to do what he sets out to do, but then lacks the faith to see it through. That in itself is a wonderful message, if we have enough faith, we can achieve what seems to be impossible, but I think that there is far more to this story if we can but see it.

I love the image where Christ needs some time alone to pray with the Father, he is away from his disciples and yet, he is still watching over them, he is observing from afar and comes to them walking on the water. I've seen my fair share of pictures of this occurrence, but I think that this one depicts the story from Matthew well, Jesus doesn't simply wander across a mill pond, the sea in in squall and he puts himself at risk for his disciples.



Consider:

- *Picking up the family question again, how far would you go for your own family members? A partner? Parents? Children? Wider family? Church family? Your brother and sister who behave differently? look different? Speak different? Believe different things to you?*
- *In an age when we believe that we have stamped out all the “ism’s” in life, do you really believe that we have? In society? In Church? In your life?*
- *Do we give lip service to issues, knowing what we know we should be saying, just for our own peace of mind? Jesus is prepared to put himself at risk for the ones he loves, it is by faith that he can walk on the water, how much faith do we have in comparison?*

Yet again, these are incredibly difficult questions and we either ignore them or we address them.

**Hymn: Called by Christ to be disciples**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXQSh2iTj2I&t>

1. Called by Christ to be disciples  
every day in every place,  
we are not to hide his hermits  
but to spread the way of grace;  
citizens of heaven’s kingdom,  
though this world is where we live,  
as we serve a faithful Master,  
faithful service may we give.
2. Richly varied are our pathways,  
many callings we pursue:  
may we use our gifts and talents  
always, Lord, to honour you;  
so in government or commerce,  
college, hospice, farm or home,  
whether volunteers or earning,  
may we see your kingdom come
3. Hard decisions may confront us,  
urging us to compromise;  
still obedience is our watchword-  
make us strong and make us wise!  
Secular is turned to sacred,  
made a precious offering,  
as our daily lives are fashioned  
in submission to our King.

### **A prayer of blessing**

As this time of worship ends,  
and I enter into the storms of life,  
and the uncertainties which may come,  
may I take heart that Jesus is present,  
and ever live for His holy name.  
And may the blessing of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be with me, and those whom I cherish in my heart, now and always.  
Amen.