

A service for Sunday 23rd August 2020

Bible Reading: Psalm 124:

Hymn: Praise my soul the King of heavens <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sx1eMwIDFb8>

1. Praise my soul the King of heaven
to his feet thy tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
who like thee his praise should sing?
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise the everlasting King!
2. Praise him for his grace and favour
to his people in distress.
Praise him, still the same for ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Praise him! Praise him!
Glorious in his faithfulness!
3. Father-like he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows.
In his hand he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.
Praise him! Praise him!
Widely yet his mercy flows!
4. Angels, in the height, adore him;
ye behold him face to face.
Sun and moon, bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space.
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise with us the God of grace!

Prayers:

Gracious God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, mindful, compassionate, constant, thank you for loving us through every season of our lives. May we believe that you call us into a new day, that you call each of us by our name, that we belong to you. And gathered or scattered, you hold us together in love.

Generous and merciful God, the only way to come to you each day is in truth, for you know us completely and love us as we are. Shine your gentle light on us so that we can know ourselves to be real, honest, and forgiven. Thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.

Old Testament Reading Exodus 1:8 – 2:10

The 15th August 2020 marked the seventy fifth anniversary of Victory in Japan, the actual end of the second world war. Having read about the atrocities that the allied troops faced at the hands of the Japanese I believe that it is important that we remember the incredible levels of courage shown by men and women, I know that the nineteen eighties TV series Tenko was a drama, but it shows the levels of torture faced by women held in Japanese camps and of course the true possibly would never have been permitted on eighties TV.

The story of Moses in the bulrushes is one of the iconic Old Testament stories and if we are not careful, we focus so much on the importance of one fragile baby becoming one of the greatest leaders in our faith history. I want us to think of the mother of Moses for a moment, all we know about her is that she is a Levite woman, but anybody who has ever been a parent, can no doubt imagine the huge amount of courage shown by this woman and maybe if she hadn't done her very best for her son, our faith might well look very different today.

Consider:

- *There is so much store set by heroes these days, who are your heroes? Try not to just think about celebrity achievers, maybe people from history.*
- *I have heroes in my life that firstly would never see themselves as being such, who might have shown acts of bravery far beyond what I feel I could do.*
- *What in your mind sets people out as heroes? We have recently been applauding our NHS Heroes and one of the forces charities is Help for Heroes, are heroes' people who do the big and impressive? Or do you have heroes who the world at large will never know?*

Hymn: He's got the whole world in his hands <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHZUMt2Zk1I>

1. He's got the whole world in his hand.
He's got the whole world in his hand.
He's got the whole world in his hand.
He's got the whole world in his hand.
2. He's got you and me, brother, in his hand.
He's got you and me, brother, in his hand.
He's got you and me, brother, in his hand.
He's got the whole world in his hand.
3. He's got you and me, sister, in his hand.
He's got you and me, sister, in his hand.
He's got you and me, sister, in his hand.
He's got the whole world in his hand.
4. He's got the little tiny baby in his hand.
He's got the little tiny baby in his hand.
He's got the little tiny baby in his hand.
He's got the whole world in his hand.

5. He's got everybody here in his hand.
He's got everybody here in his hand.
He's got everybody here in his hand.
He's got the whole world in his hand.

Epistle Romans 12: 1-8

I was watching a TV programme that was paying tribute to the greatest losers of all time. The winner of the Men's Ski Jump in the 1988 winter Olympics was Finland's Matti Nykanen a name that has possibly been forgotten by most through the passage of time. The man who came last in that event was one Michael Edwards a plasterer from Cheltenham in Gloucester better known as "Eddie the Eagle" the world loves a winner, but don't we just love a character who does their best, gives their all and even if they fail in the eyes of the world, we love them all the more.

Paul recognises as he writes to the Roman Church, that the standards of the world are set at people being winners, holding the balance of power, impressing others by their power, their authority, their wisdom, their wealth and their beauty, Paul promotes the same message that Jesus promotes, that the kingdom of God belongs to the very least.

Consider:

- *I stood close to the finish line of the Great North run for several years, and the people I applauded loudest for were the blind runners attached to a sighted runner, the people who had given their all and staggered over the line, spent and in pain? Who are the "losers" you admire the most?*
- *In your opinion is there a place for people whose best is not very good, but is freely and willingly given, would you criticise, or complement? Advise how to be better, or accept their best, whatever it is like?*
- *Have you ever not done something that you might have quite liked to do, because you thought you weren't good enough? How do you think God would judge your efforts?*

A time of prayer

Holy and gracious God, we pray for others, prayers that bring to mind the world's realities. Please teach us not to be afraid, because it is here we find you, sharing this deeply troubled world with us.

Please bless all who are continuing to make a difference: scientists working faster than ever before to find cure or vaccine for covid-19; chefs, volunteers, entertainers, neighbours and countless more. **May they know your laughter and love.**

We ask you to bless all who are there to care for those who are at their lowest, especially in health and care services.

May they know your persevering strength.

We pray for the hundreds of thousands who are grieving here and across the world: for the loss of loved ones, loss of livelihood, loss of confidence and hope, loss of any sense of wellbeing. **May they know your comfort, strong and everlasting.**

We pray for people who need the world to be a more just and equal place, and for those who have power to make changes. May it happen quickly and peacefully. **May they know your righteousness.**

We pray for all who need the world to remember them: refugees and asylum seekers, all living in poverty and suffering from climate change. **May we remember; may they know your provision through us.**

Thank you for all, profoundly known and loved, who enrich our lives every day.

The Lord's Prayer:

Hymn **Take my life and let it be** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQ93HvuYd5Y> or

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gf11rReeWIs>

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take my life, and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee;
take my moments and my days,
let them flow in ceaseless praise. 2. Take my hands, and let them move
at the impulse of thy love;
take my feet, and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Take my voice, and let me sing
always, only, for my King;
take my lips, and let them be
filled with messages from thee. 4. Take my silver and my gold,
not a mite would I withhold;
take my intellect, and use
every power as thou shalt choose. |
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5. Take my will and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine.
take my heart, it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne.

6. Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure store;
take my self, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee.

Gospel **Matthew 16: 13 -20**

We have an amazing group of people in the modern world who fall under that intriguing title “celebrity” at my least charitable, I condemn them as people who do very little apart from appearing in glossy magazines or reality TV programmes, they don’t appear to do much, to possess a great wealth of skill, but are almost famous, simply because they are famous. I see some programme titled Celebrity something and I don’t know who the contestants are. It seems to me that we live in a world today where ego matters more than almost everything else and people crave fame and importance.

I can’t possibly believe that Jesus is on some sort of celebrity fishing trip, trying to gain some hero worship, he is genuinely trying to see if the disciples really understand who it is that they are following, Jesus isn’t just a rabbi, like other rabbi’s, he is God, the others are vague, but Peter in his enthusiasm, absolutely nails his colours to the mast “you are the Messiah!” he proclaims. Jesus places the future of the Christian faith in the hands of the disciples and two thousand years on we, as the people of God hold the keys to eternity.

Consider:

- *Over the years I have met with people who have candidated for the ministry and I am always concerned at what motivates people. What motivates you to do whatever you do? Do you want to be important? Do you want others to admire your skills? I think that maybe the most important question is, who receives the glory for what we do?*
- *At a time when we are making tentative steps back to worship, I think that it is important to ask who worship is for, is it for us? Is it for people currently outside the family of the church? Is it for God?*
- *At a time when we are not supposed to be singing, particularly as Methodist people are renowned for our hymn singing, how else can we offer worship to God? What worshipful components can replace hymn singing? Is it the same, reading the words of hymns, rather than singing them?*

Hymn: Jesus shall take the highest honour [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= GaiRYYOB0Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GaiRYYOB0Y)

Jesus shall take the highest honour
Jesus shall take the highest praise
Let all earth join heaven in exalting
The Name which is above all other names
Let's bow the knee in humble adoration
For at His Name every knee must bow
Let every tongue confess He is Christ God's only Son
Sovereign Lord we give You glory now

For all honour and blessing and power
Belongs to You belongs to You
All honour and blessing and power
Belongs to You belongs to You
Lord Jesus Christ Son of the living God

A prayer of blessing

Generous God, please fill your holy gift of life with grace; please bless your fragile gift of life with joy; please help us always to cherish your precious gift of life. Amen.