

A service for Sunday 30th August 2020

Bible Reading: Psalm 105: 1-6

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

1. "Great is Thy faithfulness, " O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.
"Great is Thy faithfulness!" "Great is Thy faithfulness!"
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
"Great is Thy faithfulness, " Lord, unto me!
2. Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.
"Great is Thy faithfulness!" "Great is Thy faithfulness!"
3. Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!
"Great is Thy faithfulness!" "Great is Thy faithfulness!"

Prayers:

Lord God, we pray to you, as Father Son and Holy Spirit, to praise you, For You are our God. We pray to thank you for all that You have done for us, for you are always there. We pray to You as our God, who made the world, died for us, rose again to show us the way to heaven, and lives in us all. We bring before you the burden of all the sins we have committed, and we say Lord God, we are sorry for them. We know that such is your Love, we are forgiven our sins. Thanks be to you, Our God, **Amen**

Old Testament Reading Exodus 3: 1-15

Sunday 30th August marks a turning point in the life of many Churches up and down the country and while some have been dipping a toe in the water, this would appear, at the time of writing to be the final Sunday in the present situation. Looking all the way back to March, I guess that few of us could have imagined that this would continue for so long and even as we prepare to "go back to normal" it may still be some time yet before "normal" looks anything like what we recognise it to be, but as we face September, I think that there is a fresh hope.

As Moses is working in the fields with his sheep, the life of the Israelite people is dire and must feel to be hopeless to the people when Moses has this incredible encounter with God. They are living under the rule of Pharaoh and are in captivity, Pharaoh is a powerful and authoritative man and Moses is instructed to go and tell him to set God's people free, what a daunting prospect!

Consider:

- *We have experienced a daunting time ourselves over the last six months and I guess that there will be people reading this who experienced life during the second world war. How has hope encouraged you to keep going when times have been difficult, even today on this Sunday before things might change again, what are your hopes for the coming weeks?*
- *During the last six months we have been forced to do things in a different way, we have been forced to draw a line under Church as we have always known it. What are your hopes for the next phase of the life of the Church? To go back to how we were. To see this as an opportunity to do things differently. What is your hope for the future of the Church of God?*
- *If God is calling you to do something different, something new, that might take you out of your comfort zone, how might you react? You might not be called to go to the most powerful people you know and instruct them in the ways of God, but do you have courage to travel with God?*

Hymn: Moses I know you're the man <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3zdLpx6GbU>

(sorry, this is the only clip I can find of this hymn, it's OK but not perfect in my opinion)

1. 'Moses I know you're the man,'
the Lord said.
You're going to work out My plan,'
the Lord said.
'Lead all the Israelites out of slavery.
And all shall make them a wandering race
called the people of God.
'So ev'ry day we're on our way,
for we're travelling, wandering race
called the people of God.'
2. 'Don't get too set in your ways,'
the Lord said.
'Each step is only a phase,'
the Lord said.
'I'll go before you and I shall be a sign
to guide My travelling, wandering race.
You're the people of God.'
3. 'No matter what you may do,'
the Lord said,
'I shall be faithful and true,'
the Lord said.
'My love will strengthen you as you go along,
for you're My travelling, wandering race.
You're the people of God.'
4. 'Look at the birds in the air,'
the Lord said.
'They fly unhampered by care,'
the Lord said.
'You will move easier if you're travelling light,
for you're a wandering vagabond race.
You're the people of God.'
5. 'Foxes have places to go,'
the Lord said.
'But I've no home here below,'
the Lord said.
'So if you want to be with Me all your days,
keep up the moving and travelling on.
You're the people of God.'

Epistle Romans 12: 9-21

We had a little dog called Sam when I was in my late teens to early twenties, he was a little smooth haired black chap, with a little dash of white down his front, I don't think we ever quite knew the correct recipe of breeds, he would never have stood a chance at Crufts. My brother and I worked away most weeks in those days and when we arrived home, Sam would get himself so excited at seeing us that his entire body shook, rather than just the little stub that had once been his tail. All that little dog ever wanted from us was to be fed, yet the love he exuded was wonderful. Just to redress the balance, I know that other people have similar relationships with cats, Sam just happened to be a dog, and this isn't about my preferences, over the years I've had dogs and cats.

Paul says in his letter "Let love be real" and the words I particularly love "outdo one another in showing honour" there is a gulf between saying "don't do anything that will harm another" and "outdo one another in showing honour" Jesus says "as I have loved you, so you must love one another" there is a joy in doing good, in sharing love in going the extra mile for others.

Consider:

- *Can you think of acts of kindness you have had shown to you over recent weeks and months, small gestures that were unexpected, things you have really appreciated? Try to think of instances where people have gone the extra mile in service of you.*
- *Try to reverse that thought process without giving the ego a good polish. Have you gone the extra mile for others? Can you think of times when maybe you could have done something and for some reason you haven't?*
- *Thinking about God, who has given to us in abundance, how often do you show your appreciation? We normally commence our worship with prayers of adoration and thanksgiving. When you come to worship, is that event in your week your offering to God in appreciation for all that he has done for you?*

A time of prayer

Gracious God, we bring before you our prayers for the world

We pray for all those who lack physical things, food, shelter, water, and all of life's necessities.

We pray for those who mourn, and those who ail. Lord, for those we may help, may our hands work quickly, and for those we personally cannot help, we pray for the hands that will.

We pray for all those who work to provide care and help to others. Lord bless them and keep them from tiredness and error, and those they care for, keep them from despair. We bring the names of those known to us before you... We pray for all in spiritual distress, who struggle to hear your message, or to come to you in prayer. Lord, help them to heed.

We pray for ourselves. Strengthen us to come through renewed in faith in certainty.

We pray for our land and nation. Lord, help us all to endure, to do our duty and to serve you faithfully. May our land be brightened by the Light of Lord as we leave these times behind.

Lord, we ask these things, knowing that when we pray, wherever we pray, you hear our prayers. Thanks be unto you, Father Son and Holy Spirit, Amen

The Lord's Prayer:

Hymn From heaven you came, Helpless babe <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrQiLEO4D5s>

1. From heaven you came helpless babe
Entered our world, your glory veiled
Not to be served but to serve
And give Your life that we might live
*This is our God, The Servant King
He calls us now to follow Him
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to The Servant King*
2. There in the garden of tears
My heavy load he chose to bear
His heart with sorrow was torn
'Yet not My will but Yours, ' He said
This is our God, The Servant King
3. Come see His hands and His feet
The scars that speak of sacrifice
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails surrendered
This is our God, The Servant King
4. So let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone Him
Each other's needs to prefer
For it is Christ we're serving
This is our God, The Servant King

Gospel Matthew 16: 21-28

During the autumn of 2018 I had to attend two weeklong training courses, teaching me to lead the formal supervision of staff members with pastoral oversight. I don't mind training courses and I recognise the importance of formal supervision, but if there is one thing I hate and always have done is role playing. People these days try to camouflage role play by calling it different names, but in the end, it rears its ugly head on most training courses, and it ruins the week for me. Sadly, like it or loathe it these experiences need to be endured if we are going to achieve what are trying to do.

In the Gospel story, Jesus is now facing the agony of Holy Week and I believe that he knows the agony of what he is facing and the challenges that sit before him are far more terrifying than the experience of role playing exercises. The events will result in physical abuse, mental abuse, neglect and ultimately death, Peter doesn't understand, hoping that there is a much more favourable alternative, but rather than hearing that, Jesus warns him that the same lies in store for them and he tells them the true cost of discipleship.

Consider:

- Deny themselves: *Ego or self-importance is one of the key measures of the modern world and our personal welfare has become of paramount importance. Jesus says, "Deny self" What are you prepared to give up for your journey of discipleship? How much will you give? What have you in life that is so precious that it will always come before God?*
- Take up their cross: *One of the most difficult lines in the Methodist Covenant Prayer is "put me to suffering" and if we stop for a moment and reflect on the suffering Christ endured for us, how much are we prepared to suffer for our faith? Is faith an inconvenience to life, or life an inconvenience to our faith? How much out of our comfort zone are we prepared to go?*
- Follow me: *The scene of Jesus by the Sea of Galilee calling his first disciples and saying "follow me" is a lovely story. Three years on, Jesus is repeating the call, but suddenly the command to follow him is about a journey*

of pain and suffering. When did you first decide to be a follower of Christ? Have you found at times that your Christian journey is hard and far more changing? Are you still committed to following Christ?

Hymn: Will you come and follow me <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zk6IUaIJ3sk>

1. Will You Come And Follow Me
If I But Call Your Name?
Will You Go Where You Don't Know
And Never Be The Same?
Will You Let My Love Be Shown,
Will You Let My Name Be Known,
Will You Let My Life Be Grown
In You And You In Me?
2. Will You Leave Yourself Behind
If I But Call Your Name?
Will You Care For Cruel And Kind
And Never Be The Same?
Will You Risk The Hostile Stare
Should Your Life Attract Or Scare?
Will You Let Me Answer Prayer
In You And You In Me?
3. Will You Love The 'You' You Hide
If I But Call Your Name?
Will You Quell The Fear Inside
And Never Be The Same?
Will You Use The Faith You've Found
To Reshape The World Around,
Through My Sight And Touch And Sound
In You And You In Me?
4. Lord, Your Summons Echoes True
When You But Call My Name.
Let Me Turn And Follow You
And Never Be The Same.
In Your Company I'll Go
Where Your Love And Footsteps Show.
Thus I'll Move And Live And Grow
In You And You In Me.

A prayer of blessing

Lord, as we go forth, may we see all the things you long for us to notice. May we be your people in all we do and say.
Amen