

## A service for Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2020

**Bible Reading:** Psalm 114

**Hymn: I sing the almighty power of God** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eeSoE1Kmmv0>

1. I sing the mighty power of God, that made the mountains rise,  
That spread the flowing seas abroad, and built the lofty skies.  
I sing the wisdom that ordained the sun to rule the day;  
The moon shines full at His command, and all the stars obey.
2. I sing the goodness of the Lord, who filled the earth with food,  
Who formed the creatures through the Word, and then pronounced them good.  
Lord, how Thy wonders are displayed, where'er I turn my eye,  
If I survey the ground I tread, or gaze upon the sky.
3. There's not a plant or flower below, but makes Thy glories known,  
And clouds arise, and tempests blow, by order from Thy throne;  
While all that borrows life from Thee is ever in Thy care;  
And everywhere that we can be, Thou, God, art present there.

### **Prayers:**

Lord you have created a world full of people, a universe full of planets and stars  
You sent us your Son Jesus to show us how to live in our world  
May we have the grace to follow Him. **Amen**

Loving God, we are sorry when we have wandered far from you.  
when we have not listened to your voice and listened instead to other voices –  
the voices of greed, and selfishness, you have offered us abundance of life,  
but we have settled for so much less.  
Forgive us

In Jesus we have been forgiven  
So let us live as one who is forgiven,  
in the name of Christ. **Amen.**

### **Old Testament Reading Exodus 14: 19-31**

The BBC broadcast an excellent series in 2013 entitled "The Village" and told the story of life in a Derbyshire village during the years 1914 to 1920, covering the period during and immediately after the first world war. The minister in the village chapel was shown preaching a sermon during the war during which he kept repeating the line "God is on our side" and the point he was trying to make was that in war, each of the battling nations believe that God is on their side and his argument was that God is on the side of right, on the side of peace. We were once re-enacting the story of Noah in Sunday School and one little lad remarked that God must be cruel to kill all the rest of nature and even though the lad was possibly eight or nine, he struggled more with what God had destroyed, than celebrating what he had saved.

I perhaps struggle with this passage telling of the crossing of the Red Sea, alright, of course, I can rejoice with the Israelite people as they were delivered to safety, but by that same token, it saddens me that the Egyptians perished and I believe that if we are not careful, we can end up valuing some lives greater than others and throughout generations, doing this has caused so much damage to entire groups of people.

### *Consider:*

- *We talk about all people being equal in the sight of god and if the Church is genuinely seeking to be the body of Christ, then surely, we should see all God's children as being equal, do you believe this?*
- *For generations, even in Church, people were side lined because of their gender, race, mental ability, social standing, opinion, and Churchmanship. We might long to believe that has changed today, has it?*
- *Who is right? And who is wrong? Is it reasonable to imagine that a group of people can all think the same, believe the same, act the same and live the same? Whose side is God on in the modern world, the Muslim?*

*The Christian? The orthodox? The free church? Are we the only ones who have got it right? How do we live alongside those who think differently to us?*

**Hymn: Lord, enthroned in heavenly splendour**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OV9wUIZJFAA>

1. Lord, enthroned in heavenly splendour,  
first begotten from the dead,  
thou alone, our strong defender,  
liftest up thy people's head.  
Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Jesus, true and living bread!
2. Here our humblest homage pay we,  
here in loving reverence bow;  
here for faith's discernment pray we,  
lest we fail to know thee now.  
Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Thou art here, we ask not how.
3. Paschal Lamb, thine offering finished  
once for all when thou wast slain,  
in its fullness undiminished  
shall forevermore remain.  
Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Cleansing souls from every stain.
4. Life imparting, heavenly manna,  
stricken Rock with streaming side,  
heaven and earth with loud hosanna  
worship thee, the Lamb who died.  
Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Risen, ascended, glorified.

**Epistle Romans 14: 1-12**

We are plagued around where I live with roadworks at the moment and signs are up warning of further work to start during the coming week. I was out the other day and my natural route home was blocked by a long queue, caused by some temporary traffic lights just beyond a set of normal lights, which were causing chaos as people were blocking the main junction. A trip of ten minutes ended up taking over half an hour because some bright spark had decided that a road closure on the obvious alternative route would be great fun!

As I read this passage from the letter to the Romans, I share Paul's frustration. I have just experienced my first week back at work after the holiday that never really was, and what a week it has been, as Churches try to figure out how to worship safely, as we try to interpret government and Methodist Church Guidelines in some attempt to try and get the church functioning. Paul reminds the Church in Rome that the key to everything is about being accountable to God, not expecting the world to sing to our tune.

*Consider:*

- *In the midst of current legislation, how do you feel about the rules? Not being allowed to touch, shake hands, hug, welcome? Regulations surrounding the wearing of masks, social distancing, talking inside the building, not being allowed to sing hymns?*
- *Who are we doing this for? To comply with government or Church legislation, some of which we believe to be somewhat questionable? For our own benefit, to safeguard us from being infected by others? Or, for the wellbeing of others, that we might protect those whom God has given us to care for?*
- *What is our attitude in Church? To mould the Church into the fellowship we want it to be? To shift Church back to what it used to be in the glory days? Or, to make it fit for generations to come? So that others might know and worship God?*

**A time of prayer**

Loving and forgiving God

We pray for our world today

As we bring the virus under control

Help and guide Prime ministers, Presidents, Kings and Queens, all types of workers around the world

Parents and children

And all who have lost loved ones

may they feel your love this week as they go about their work. **Amen**

***The Lord's Prayer:***

**Hymn Christ, from whom all blessing flow** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTjM4eSGx1g>

1. Christ, from whom all blessings flow,  
Perfecting the saints below,  
Hear us, who Thy nature share,  
Who Thy mystic body are.

2. Join us, in one spirit join,  
Let us still receive of Thine;  
Still for more on Thee we call,  
Thou who fillest all in all.
3. Closer knit to Thee, our head,  
Nourish us, O Christ, and feed;  
Let us daily growth receive,  
More and more in Jesus live.
4. Never from thy service move,  
Needful to the others prove,

Use the grace on each bestowed,  
Tempered by the art of God.

5. Love, like death, hath all destroyed,  
Rendered all distinctions void:  
Names, and sects, and parties fall;  
Thou, O Christ, art all in all!

**Gospel                  Matthew 18: 21-35**

It was noticeable this week that the schools have gone back after almost six months of somewhat reduced numbers attending, I pulled up a pelican crossing close to one of the high schools and an army of students spilled across the road in front of me, from my vantage point I could see that the little green man had turned to red and still they poured onto the crossing one little lad, possibly no older than twelve deliberately walked slowly across, after my light had turned to green and he looked defiantly right at me and consequently right into the lens of my dashcam. Within seconds, I became the judge, the jury and the executioner, I was going to teach that lad a lesson and in my journey home, I was going to take the card out of the camera, download the film and send it to the Head teacher, that child was going to be disciplined, maybe even expelled!

I didn't do anything. In my more rational state of mind, I had much greater issues to deal with and although he might never know, I forgave him. There are times when we feel hurt, disgusted, and even abused by others who share this journey of life and Peter's question of Jesus seems utterly reasonable. Life is filled with people who want to be at the top of the pile, who want others to sing to their tune, who act in ways that we believe are wrong and unacceptable and we long to put them in their place, teach them a lesson or two, pull them into line.

*Consider:*

- *How do we do this? May I suggest that the first stage is to stop and pray. I have seen situations in Church escalate out of control, simply because different factions have believed they were right, remember the minister in The Village "God is our side" where is God? Are we, always right?*
- *Pass the problem on to somebody else to solve. Remember to ultimate playground threat "I'll get my dad onto you" there is a belief that getting somebody with greater power to direct the one we believe to be wrong is the ultimate means of getting our own way. Does this solve the problem? Would the Head teacher telling the you lad off have sorted the problem? Would sending a letter home to his parents do any good? I guess that I might have felt to have won, but at what cost?*
- *Reaching a compromise. I was always lead to believe that backing down, was a sign of weakness, I don't believe that any more, I believe that the price of build the Kingdom of God is worth far more than me polishing my ego. Do you agree?*

**Hymn: Only by Grace can we enter      <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hv72Q23llp0>**

Only by grace can we enter

Only by grace can we stand  
Not by our human endeavor  
But by the blood of the Lamb  
Into Your presence You call us  
You call us to come  
Into Your presence You draw us

And now by Your grace we come  
Now by Your grace we come  
Lord if You mark our transgressions  
Who could stand  
By the blood of the Lamb

**A prayer of blessing**

May the love of the Lord rest upon your soul  
May his love dwell in you throughout every day  
May his Countenance shine upon you and be gracious to you  
May His Spirit be upon you as you leave this place. Amen