



**Call:** Eternal God, we have heard your story, read your story, and felt your story. As we gather to worship with others, or simply on our own, may we know deep within us that your story lives on and that your story involves and includes us, part of the tapestry of history over the years. AMEN

**Hymn:** STF 24 Come, Now is the time to worship  
watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Za4roZrWpc8>

Come, now is the time to worship,  
come, now is the time to give your heart;  
come, just as you are to worship,  
come, just as you are before your God.  
Come.

One day every tongue  
will confess you are God,  
one day every knee will bow.  
Still, the greatest treasure remains  
for those who gladly choose you now

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**Prayer:** Eternal God, you are the one who made us and we are yours. We are your people, the sheep of your pasture. We gather together here in this place, or simply by sharing this act of worship at home; wherever we are we come to you with thanksgiving and with praise. All honour and glory are yours now and forever. AMEN

**Prayer of confession:** Forgive us, creator God, if our story is not as you want it to be. There are times when we are dishonest with others, with ourselves but more importantly with you. Forgive us when our story is littered with mistakes, and gives the wrong impression of who we really are. Forgive us if our story does not reveal the love, care and compassion you have for all people. Forgive us if our story stops people coming to know you, and knowing for themselves the freedom of forgiveness and new life in you. Forgive us if our story does not express how much your story matters to us.

Your love, O God, has forgiven us, redeemed us and cleansed us. Your Word has spoken, your fire has cleansed, making us pure once more. We are yours, and are now assured of a place in your ongoing story. AMEN

**Reading:** Exodus 19:2-8a

**Hymn:** STF156 – From the breaking of the dawn  
Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKeaL2kM7Jk>

From the breaking of the dawn  
to the setting of the sun,  
I will stand on every promise of your word.  
Words of power, strong to save,  
that will never pass away;  
I will stand on every promise of your word.  
For Your covenant is sure,  
and on this I am secure:  
I can stand on every promise of your word.

When I stumble and I sin,  
condemnation pressing in,  
I will stand on every promise of your word.  
You are faithful to forgive,  
that in freedom I might live,

so I stand on every promise of your word.  
Guilt to innocence restored;  
you remember sins no more.  
So I'll stand on every promise of your word.

When I'm faced with anguished choice  
I will listen for your voice,  
and I'll stand on every promise of your word.  
Through this dark and troubled land,  
you will guide me with your hand  
as I stand on every promise of your word.  
And you've promised to complete  
every work begun in me,  
so I'll stand on every promise of your word.

Hope that lifts me from despair,  
love that casts out every fear  
as I stand on every promise of your word.  
Not forsaken, not alone,  
for the Comforter has come,

and I stand on every promise of your word.  
Grace sufficient, grace for me,  
grace for all who will believe.  
We will stand on every promise of your word.

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**Reading:** Matthew 9:35-10:8

**Hymn:** STF 407 – Hear the call of the kingdom

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-MstAsQseFY>

Hear the call of the kingdom, lift your eyes to the King;  
let his song rise within you as a fragrant offering  
of how God, rich in mercy, came in Christ to redeem  
all who trust in his unfailing grace.

Hear the call of the kingdom to be children of light,  
with the mercy of heaven, the humility of Christ;  
walking justly before him, loving all that is right,  
that the life of Christ may shine through us.

*King of heaven, we will answer the call.  
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,  
filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim  
salvation in Jesus' name.*

Hear the call of the kingdom to reach out to the lost  
with the Father's compassion in the wonder of the  
cross,  
bringing peace and forgiveness, and a hope yet to  
come:  
let the nations put their trust in him.

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**Message:** “Keep it simple”

Our bible readings today appear at first to focus solely on getting the gospel message out to a small group of people, in one small corner of the world.

Surely, Jesus came for all people, for Jews and Gentiles, for rich and for poor, for young and for old?

Surely this passage contradicts the words right at the end of Matthew's Gospel, that great commission to go out into all corners of the world?

We need, for a moment, to take a step right back to Genesis.

God had made a covenant promise with Abraham. He promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great a nation, and have many descendants. God promised to bless and care for these people.

In return the people promised to obey God, but that promise was all too quickly broken and the great nation was taken into slavery in Egypt. God had compassion for his nation, and sent Moses to rescue the people and so he led them across the Red Sea and to the foot of Mount Sinai. It is here that God appeared again to Moses and once again promised that Israel would be a great nation – “his treasured possession, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.”

Why did God need a holy nation? He needed a nation to represent his way of living, to teach his Word to the world and to be an agent of salvation for the world. The Jews were God's chosen people, Israel that great nation. But they repeatedly turned away from God.

Fast forward to the time of Jesus. God sent Jesus to bring Israel back, and Jesus chose 12 disciples to help him.

Who were these disciples?

Matthew gives us few details about the individuals apart from to say that Matthew was a tax collector and Simon was a zealot. These two are interesting characters. If they had met in any other circumstances, Simon, the ardent zealot, willing to go even to violent means to overthrow the enemy, would possibly have happily knifed Matthew, who was seen as a collaborator with the enemy, a swindler, and an exploiter of the poor. Yet Jesus chose this mixed bunch of fishermen, money makers and political activists. He called them and they willingly answered, and he appointed them and authorised them to continue his ministry.

However rather than going out in to the world, Jesus told them to stay put in Israel.

Why was this? Why so narrow a focus?

As we know from the whole of the Old Testament, God came first to the Jewish nation, he rescued the Jewish nation from slavery, he brought them back from exile. They were the first people to have been offered the gospel, Jesus was a Jew and came to live amongst the Jews. He did not travel further afield. Yes, the Jews rejected him and rejected the gospel message.

The other reason I believe Jesus gave them this narrow focus, was to keep it simple. They were just starting out – they had heard his preaching and had seen his healing, but now he was tasking them to take over.

There was a need to keep it simple, they were ill equipped at that time, with little or no experience. It was going to be sensible for them to concentrate their time and energy in one place, to work together and support each other.

What was it that Jesus was tasking them to do?

Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers and drive out demons – no mean feat! Simple?

Why did Jesus choose them? Why at that time?

Jesus could see the time was right. As he went through the towns and villages, he encountered crowds who were bewildered, who were searching, who were asking questions, who were wanting to hear, to learn, to be healed. The harvest was ready but the workers were few. The mission was urgent.

How does this apply to us today?

In the Methodist Way of Life, Our Calling, we are called to look at faith in four areas, and I think these fit quite neatly with what Jesus was asking of his apostles, as they were now named in Matthew's gospel, meaning to be sent out.

So, we are to be sent out to worship, to learn and to care, to serve and to evangelise.

Jesus tells his apostles they are to preach, to proclaim his gospel of good news, to use words to spread the gospel. And so we are called to worship God and enable others to do so.

However, it's not just words, but also actions.

Teaching involves learning, by what we say but also by the example of how we live our lives. By showing the significance of what it means to have Jesus in our lives we can learn ourselves and help others to learn.

We can care for others, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Jesus called the apostles to heal the sick, to raise the dead, cleanse the lepers and to cast out demons.

That might sound like a tall order, not easy, but think about it – helping those who are unwell physically, but also helping those who are unwell spiritually, helping others to let go of the wrong things in their lives – raising them from the death of sin.

We may not have leprosy here, but we do have those things that pollute us – ecologically and spiritually, and if we live as Jesus would have us do, we are cleansed.

Similarly casting out demons may not be something we would contemplate, but we all carry those burdens and inner demons that can be a barrier between ourselves and God.

We can serve others in our actions, in our words and our prayers, working to bring about justice, caring for our planet, lifting the burdens that others carry.

Through our words and our actions others will see how being in that close relationship with God, having Jesus as our Saviour brings about renewal and change.

So, just as Jesus chose his twelve disciples and sent them out as apostles, so he chooses us.

Just as he called them, so he calls us to respond, willingly.

Just as he gave them authority, so he gives us authority.

He sends us out. But don't worry, he wants us to keep it simple, start simple, start small, work together, support each other. Know your limitations. Do one thing and do it well.

Remember the harvest is ripe, the mission is urgent and the workers are few – pray for workers, but don't be surprised when God calls you!

**Let us pray:** Thank you God that you sent Jesus into the world. Help us to discern your call, help us to recognise our mission field, even on our own doorstep. We know there are people searching, people asking, may your Holy Spirit empower us to not only speak the right words but also to show your love by the example of our lives. AMEN

#### **Prayers:**

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of life, and above all for your love in dying for us. Break down any barriers which prevent us being at peace with you, and fill your Church with love for all who do not yet know your peace.

Father we thank you for the diversity and richness of your world, for the peoples of all nations, races, and cultures.

We thank you for the natural goodness of so many. We pray for all the victims of our world's mistakes and evils, and ask your guidance and courage for world leaders and advisors.

Father, we thank you for the joy of families and friendships, and for the opportunities of learning what real loving is all about. We pray for those whom we love and worry about, and for those who love and worry about us, commending one another to your keeping.

Father, we pray for those who are unwell and suffering in any way. We pray for those who are anxious and worried, and who long for the peace of mind that eludes them.

Father, we thank you for all who have lived your praise and for the coming of your kingdom. Receive into joy all who have died in faith.

Father, we thank you for all who sense your calling and respond to it with joy. We pray for still more workers in your harvest, to gather in many to share in the joy of knowing you.

Merciful Father, accept these, and all our prayers in the name of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN

#### **Hymn:** STF 503 Love Divine

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPbD2G3i-7Y>

Love divine all loves excelling,  
joy of heaven, to earth come down!

Fix in us thy humble dwelling,  
all thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesus, thou art all compassion,  
pure, unbounded love thou art;  
visit us with thy salvation,  
enter every longing heart.

Come, almighty, to deliver;  
let us all thy grace receive;  
suddenly return, and never,  
nevermore thy temples leave.  
Thee would we be always blessing,  
serve thee as thy hosts above,

pray and praise thee without ceasing,  
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation,  
pure and spotless may we be;  
let us see our whole salvation  
perfectly secured by thee:  
Changed from glory into glory,  
till in heaven we take our place;  
till we cast our crowns before thee,  
lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)  
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**Blessing:** Transforming God, as we leave this time and place of worship, may we be full of your amazing story, wanting to share it with those whom we meet, so that more lives may be transformed. AMEN