



Jersey Methodist Circuit

Sunday 10th May 2020 Easter 5 Deacon Sally & Rev Danny Wheadon (Ann & David Marett and Lorraine Wheeler)

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use as you are unable to attend church. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you

Opening Prayer:

Jesus said 'I am the way'. He is the light that shines on us and through us. We come to seek the way that we may receive new life and serve in all that we are.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Collect for the Day (from the Methodist Worship Book (MWB))

Loving and eternal God, through the resurrection of your Son, help us to face the future with courage and assurance, knowing that nothing in life or death can ever part us from your love for us in Jesus Christ our Saviour; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Hymn: Jesus, the Name high over all (StF 357)

Sing/Read/pray/proclaim the words: Saint Michael's Singers, Coventry Cathedral from their CD 'Daily Abundance', 2002.

- 1 Jesus-the name high over all,
in hell, or earth, or sky!
Angels revere, and nations fall,
and devils fear and fly.
- 2 Jesus-the name to sinners dear,
the name to sinners given!
It scatters all their guilty fear,
it turns their hell to heaven.
- 3 Jesus-the prisoner's fetters breaks,
and bruises Satan's head;
power into strengthless souls it speaks,
and life into the dead.
- 4 O that the world might taste and see
the riches of his grace!
The arms of love that compass me
would all that life embrace.
- 5 His only righteousness I show,
his saving grace proclaim;
'tis all my business here below,
to cry: 'Behold the Lamb!'
- 6 Happy if with my latest breath
I might but gasp his name;
preach him to all, and cry in death:
'Behold, behold the Lamb!'

Charles Wesley (1707-1788) CCL Licence No. 4163

Let us pray together

Wondrous God: We are blessed that we can come together to praise you despite the restrictions and difficulties in our lives.

We come together to worship you and give you thanks. We celebrate our life together as your people.

In a moment of silence we share with you the things we want to give praise and thanks for today.

Moment of silence

Thank you for this delicate but awe-inspiring world we live in; for the opportunities in the world to respond to your call.

Thank you for a world which is full of diversity, where there are many opportunities to worship you and to serve you and those we meet in different ways.

Help us not to use their differences as excuses to build walls that divide. Help us to see each difference as a rainbow of hope and as a pattern where each colour is linked and bound together by your unending love.

Forgive us, loving God, when we do not accept the diversity of the world; when we forget that we are all your people, loved equally and known to you by name.

Forgive us for our foolishness and our thoughtless use of the gifts of your creation,
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

For our neglect of you, and our failure to care for others,

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

For our selfishness in prayer and our carelessness in worship,

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Moment of silence

Here is good news for all who put their trust in Christ. Jesus says: 'Your sins are forgiven.'

Amen. Thanks be to God

(Words of confession from the MWB)

Today's Readings: *Read by Ann & David Marett*
Acts 7:55-60; 1 Peter 2: 4-8a, 9; John 14:1-14

Time to Reflect with Deacon Sally Wheadon

I choose all three of the set Bible readings this week because I like them all! And because I think they are all well-known and you might like them too. But let's start with the reading from Acts, the story of Stephen, or Deacon Stephen as I like to call him. I occasionally like to remind Danny, my husband, who's a presbyter that the first Christian martyr was actually a deacon. But Stephen wasn't martyred for waiting on tables, nor because he had a basket full of perishable goods. He was martyred because he was a prophetic voice, as all deacons are called to be. He spoke the truth. And often we don't like the truth being spelled out to us, particularly if it forces us to rethink, or if challenges our framework of understanding, or upsets the status quo. Stephen spoke the truth and he laid down his life just as Christ did before him.

Stephen was a living stone wasn't he? He was living out the gospel and witnessing to the love of Christ through loving service. We know the church is not the building but the people, and we are all called to be living stones today. When Danny was speaking a few weeks back, he showed us a cartoon of Jesus in a Zoom meeting. Well I saw a cartoon too. I don't have a picture of it I'm afraid, but it was very simple. It was a drawing of a church and on the noticeboard outside it said 'The building is closed but the Church is very much open for business.'

We are called to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice, and to serve God with the whole of lives. At the theological college I attended, there is a sign above the chapel door on the inside so you only see it as you're leaving the chapel and it says 'You are now entering a place of worship.' We can find the sacred in everything we do if we offer it to God and approach it with the right attitude. Even standing at the sink washing the dishes can become a sacred act.

So we are called to be living stones but let's not kid ourselves that we, as Christians, have the monopoly on good deeds and loving service. And before you pick up your stones to throw at me, we all know it's true. There are people of other faiths and none out there who are risking their lives daily to meet our needs at this time. Doctors and nurses; care staff and paramedics; cleaners; shop workers; delivery drivers; food producers; postal workers; refuge collectors; volunteers and many others; some of whom who have sadly lost their lives in the service of others during this pandemic. Whether they are Christians or not, we cannot deny that Jesus says 'there is no greater love than

this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.' So as Christians we have to be humble enough to recognise that there is a fantastic amount of good work and loving service going on out there. But having said that, we do have something extra to offer and that something is the hope that we have within us. At a time when people are struggling, when people are frightened and anxious, we can model a non-anxious presence.

In our gospel reading Jesus says "You know the way to the place where I am going." Well of course, at that point, Thomas didn't have the benefit of hindsight. He hadn't seen the scars on the body of the risen Jesus, and so he says "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way." Well the thing is that we, as Christians today, are witnesses to what the risen Christ is doing in our lives right now and we have that testimony that we can share with others at this time. We do know the way to the place where Jesus is and we can tell others. Jesus says "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." So when people question the existence of a loving God in the midst of this crisis, we can tell them that we have seen God in Christ Jesus and that God loves them and cares for them very much.

Yes, we should be taking our place with all the people out there at this current time, being good neighbours according to our ability. And I recognise for some that might mean making one phone call a day to encourage someone else to keep going. But let's not forget, whatever it is we are able to offer, over and above that, we can offer an account of the hope we have within us.

I want to finish with two stories. The first one is about a silk art exhibition that we held in one of our previous churches. There were about twenty paintings, each about 6ft high and they were all beautiful. But there was one that represented some verses from Romans 8 and a gentleman was standing looking at that painting. He said to me, "I love these verses" and then he went on to tell me a story. He had worked in an office during the Suez crisis back in the 1950s and this particular day, a young man came into work and he was terrified about what he thought was about to happen. Well his colleagues couldn't pacify him at all until the gentleman took out his Bible and read to him from Romans 8:

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

After he finished reading, the gentleman looking at the painting said that a peace seemed to descend upon that young man and he was able to carry on and do his job that day. That's what we as Christians have to offer, a peace that passes all understanding.

Finally, I want to tell you about my first primary school teacher. When I knew her at school, I was only four so it hadn't occurred to me that she was a Christian. But our paths crossed again later in life when she became a Methodist lay preacher and came to preach at the church I was attending. It transpires that she was a wonderful Christian lady who had a wonderful ministry of sending cards of encouragement to others. Well, she lived to a good age and her life came to a natural conclusion. Her funeral service was a wonderful Christian affair and I remember at the end of the service, as the cortege was processing out of the church, the organist started to play the tune to the hymn 'Blessed Assurance.' Well, being Methodists, we latched on to this straight away and we started to hum along. Then we started to sing, and the singing got louder and louder. By the time the cortege reached the door of the church, you would have thought the roof was going to lift off as we stood tall and sang: "this is my story; this is my song; praising my Saviour all the day long."

And that was such a wonderful witness because right next to that church was a public car park. Imagine if anyone had been in that car park and saw the hearse in the driveway of the church while hearing this most amazing, almost defiant singing. We were declaring that we will not be kept down by this, we will not be overcome by this, despite our sorrow and our loss, we will sing of the hope we have within us and we will praise God. What a wonderful witness that must have been for those people and that's what we, as Christians, have to offer.

But as I'm saying this, I'm conscious of what is going on at the moment, and that there maybe people listening today who have not been able to give their loved ones the send-off they would have liked them to have. People who have not had the opportunity to stand tall and sing of the hope they have within them. And so, if that is you, if you do feel able, I invite you to join with us all this morning. Be joined together by the Holy Spirit and stand tall wherever you are and sing with us now. Let's raise the roof. Maybe open a window or a door. There might be a neighbour out there in the garden; there maybe someone walking past on their daily exercise. Let's witness to the world now by standing and singing together 'Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine.'

Hymn: Blessed Assurance (StF 548)

Sing / Read / pray / or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jotNbcFelX4>

1 Blessèd assurance, Jesus is mine:
 O what a foretaste of glory divine!
 Heir of salvation purchase of God;
 Born of his Spirit, washed in his blood:

*This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour, all the day long.*

2 Perfect submission, perfect delight,
 Visions of rapture burst on my sight;
 Angels descending bring from above
 Echoes of mercy, whispers of love:

*This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour, all the day long.*

3 Perfect submission, all is at rest -
 I in my Saviour am happy and blest -
 Watching and waiting, looking above,
 Filled with his goodness, lost in his love.

*This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour, all the day long.*

*Frances Jane van Alstyne (Fanny Crosby) (1820-1915) –
Public Domain*

A time of prayer (Lorraine Wheeler)

Let us pray

Gracious God, who alone makes us dwell in safety: Whilst we are still in lockdown, help us to understand that our hearts are free as we know you, Our Lord and we can find strength in you and our sweet Lord Jesus, the Cornerstone of our faith.

Whilst our whole island is affected by coronavirus-through illness or isolation or anxiety, may we all find relief and recovery through the healing tranquillity of your Holy Spirit and realise beauty anew in our island landscape as we exercise.

God our Saviour,

We pray for those who feel hopeless that they may hear your good news and be freed from their anguish.

Silence

We pray for those who have had their expectation of hope torn away, for those who feel discarded and deceived.

Silence

We pray that the Church will stand together with those who are suffering, working for acceptance and peace.

Silence

We pray for those who are beginning to hope, those who dare to dream of a better tomorrow.

Silence

We pray for all affected during this Covid-19 pandemic. We pray for those who are poor, sick, homeless, lonely, imprisoned, weighed down and powerless.

Silence

May your love reach them and may we all stand together. May your Church reach out to those in need, so that all may come to give thanks to you, and celebrate together.

Amen**The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father

Hymn: Hear the call of the kingdom (StF407)

Sing / Read / pray / or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jotNbcFelX4>

1 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.

*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.*

2 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.*

3 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.

*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.*

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Stuart Townend (born 1963) © 2006 Thankyou MusicUsed
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A prayer of blessing (from the (MWB)

God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead, strengthen us to walk with him in his risen life; and may almighty God bless us, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Original Materials (unless referenced) by Cathie Steele,
Vale of Glamorgan Methodist Circuit

