

1st June 2025 – Morning Service

Rev Michael Payne

Call to Worship - Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

StF 83 – Praise my soul the King of heaven

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| 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 him! Praise him!
Praise the everlasting King! | 3) Father-like, he tends and spares us;
Well our feeble frame he knows;
In his hands he gently bears us,
Rescues us from all our foes.
Praise him! Praise him! Praise him! Praise him!
Widely as his mercy flows. |
| 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! Praise him! Praise him!
Glorious in his faithfulness. | 4) Angels in the heights, 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 him! Praise him!
Praise with us the God of grace! |

Henry Francis Lyte

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Lord, you are worthy of our praise and adoration for many reasons;

We praise you for the power by and through which you made the world and that which is beyond. We praise you for the love with which it was designed and with which it was filled.

We praise you for your glory, your authority, majesty, mercy and grace.

We praise you for those moments when we become aware of your presence with us. Though great Creator you are with us, you are not far from us, not because we are worthy but because you seek us out.

We praise you for coming into our presence in Jesus your Son, born as fully human, crucified and dying as a fully human and by the power of your love risen from the dead and ascended into Glory. Through this we can know more of his power and his glory, his sovereignty and authority.

We praise you for the assurance that the one who died is the one who is risen, the one who came is the one who ascended and the one who ascended is the one who has poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit upon your people.

We ask that though the power of your Spirit we may offer words and songs and lives of witness to bring you praise and glory. Through Jesus our Lord and Saviour we pray. **Amen**

Prayer of Confession

Lord when our songs, words and deeds do not bring you glory forgive us.

When our sharing of truth is not truth, forgive us.

When our offering of love and mercy are far from as they should be, forgive us.

In your mercy speak into our heart and minds that as we confess you forgive and accept us as your children, restored into the heart of your family. May we know sins forgiven and find healing in your presence. Through not our worthiness but your grace. **Amen**

StF 338 – There is a redeemer

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| 1) There is a Redeemer,
Jesus, God's own Son.
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
Holy One. | 2) Jesus my Redeemer,
Name above all names,
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
O for sinners slain. |
| Ch) <i>Thank You, O my Father,
For giving us Your Son,
And leaving Your Spirit till
The work on earth is done.</i> | 3) When I stand in glory
I will see His face,
And there I'll serve my King for ever
In that holy place. |

Melody & Keith Green © 1982 Birdwing Music

Reading: John 14:23-29

Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me. I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe."

Reading: Acts 1:1-11

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

StF 315 – We sing the praise of Jesus

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| 1) We sing the praise of Jesus,
Of our ascending Lord;
The triumph of our Saviour,
Of Christ the Son of God.
The forty days are over,
Earth sees his face no more;
But Christ the King of glory
We worship and adore. | 2) Rejoicing in Christ's promise
We wait in prayer and praise,
The Spirit sent from heaven
To set the earth ablaze;
We pray with expectation,
We praise with one accord,
We wait for living fire,
The power of the Lord. |
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3) Therefore with saints and angels
And all the hosts above
We lift our hearts and voices
To bless the God of love;
To sing of our Redeemer
Who intercedes and prays,
That God the Holy Spirit
May guide us all our days.

4) With songs of alleluia
Let earth and heaven ring;
And praises to the Father
Let all creation sing.
All honour be to Jesus,
God's own eternal Son;
And to the Holy Spirit
Let endless praise be done!

Norman Wallwork © Norman Wallwork

Sermon – Comings and Goings

You are all probably aware of the line, “If from dust we come and to dust we return there is someone coming or going under the bed.” We might come back to that idea in a little while.

For now have you ever been geographically embarrassed – otherwise known as lost? There are occasions when being lost is no longer a big issue due to the various electronic devices and systems available to us. When unaware of where we are “The SatNav” and digital maps can come to our aid, if we have the appropriate device and know how to use it. In years gone by if we were driving a car and we did not know where we were we used to try and find some signposts and then look at a map to see if we could work out where we are and how we get to our destination.

I remember being with some friends driving around in the Brecon Beacons and becoming unsure of where we were. It was slightly embarrassing as I was navigating and had the map. Ian, who was driving, had been in the RAF. He looked around, looked at the OS map and quickly located our position. He knew how to read the signs and make sense of them. If we are out walking in the hills, and the clouds have come down, it is getting colder and darker, we have lost the path we were walking along and it is so foggy that we cannot find any landmarks to take as reference points it can be a very different story. In such a situation anxiety and panic may become the reality.

Being lost can be a frightening experience if we have no resources at our disposal or do not know how to use the ones we have. Give me a compass and a map and I can still be lost! Being lost can cause us to be totally disorientated and thinking straight suddenly becomes very complicated. Loss and change can have the same effect and we can feel confused and lost; without hope. In the two readings we have read, Jesus, firstly, talking to his disciples on the evening before his crucifixion, and secondly at the point of his ascension left the disciples feeling lost, with no idea of what shape the future would take. The disciples were faced with separation from Jesus, not just once but twice. In the Gospel reading Jesus, announcing his upcoming death, stressed the disciples: Jesus was quite calm as he spoke about his death. A few days later they were greeted by the risen Jesus and hope returned. Forty days later they were faced with losing him again. They, having had encounters with the risen Jesus over that 40 days period now face another loss experience.

Our first experience of loss occurs at birth when we lose that physical attachment to our mother and from then on loss and change are an intrinsic part of life. Many of us, as we grew up, amongst the books we read could well have been Billy Bunter at Grey friars, Jennings or Mallory Towers; each giving an insight into the lives of these fictional characters at boarding schools. Often it all seemed a great adventure- but what about the separation? Some of you may well have attended boarding school and will have your own memories of the situation and the issues of loss and value that can result.

Some 28 years ago the concept of the child at boarding school hit the bookshelves again – this time it was Hogwarts and Harry Potter and his friends. Yes it was 28years ago! For Harry Potter it was not so bad because for him boarding school it was better than the home life he had grown up with. This is not always the case!

There are many changes in family life and many changes are not always easy to cope with, whatever form it takes. A change of school, a change of home; a parent or partner working away from home as a job changes, a parent or partner in the forces going on a long tour of duty somewhere around the world. We all face change and loss in our lives and we face them in differing ways.

But “where is this going?” you may well ask. Our Gospel readings were set firstly right before the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus and the second reading from the Acts of the Apostles spoke of the moment of Jesus’ ascension. These readings are appropriate for times of letting go, moving on, growing up. In those moments it is not Jesus who is traumatised by the events about to unfold it is the disciples; it is time for them to grow up and to remember and trust his previous words. We remember in the Easter story Mary was in the garden and Jesus says to her “do not hold on to me” – letting go is not easy at any time in life – but it is something we have to do. Jesus gave his disciples 2 ways of navigating through the loss of himself.

1. They were to remain faithful to his teaching; for by learning from and following his example he would live on with them.
2. There was the promise of the Holy Spirit infusing the believers with the life of God.

How can this help us deal with loss? Each of you may well have faced a loss recently. What was the loss? Was it a job, a house, a pet, a child leaving home, a lifelong friend moving or spouse dying? Was it a church community; was it a role within a community? In each point of loss Jesus is with us.

Across the Circuit many have experienced the loss of their spiritual home with the closing and sale of Church buildings. These are life changing and life shaping events that require us to let go of the familiar and to move on into the unknown. These losses are felt, and dealt with differently by each person. In these points of loss we deal with it as we cope with geographical embarrassment - in different ways, depending upon our own individual nature and the resources we have available to us. Yet in each point of loss and change Jesus encourages us to remain faithful to his teaching for by learning from him and through following his example he will live on with us; and the Holy Spirit will infuse us with the life of God and give us strength to face a different tomorrow – but it is not a quick fix.

In the Methodist Church we are used to clergy coming and going (often dust is found somewhere in the manse); the impact of one minister upon a person’s life might be very different from that of another; we can feel the change very differently. As Alan and Michele shall be moving in a few weeks time there will be some who will find this change more difficult than others; the letting go will not be easy, and that is applicable both ways. For those who Alan and Michele have walked with through important points of life their moving on will be felt as a big loss but letting go and moving on can also be times of growth. In growth points we do not need to face them alone; for God has promised the help of His Spirit and we have the support of each other in Church Family. It is about the Fellowship of believers supporting each other. The support Jesus offered his disciples did not remove the enormity of the loss – either at the crucifixion or the ascension, but in both he offered a means by which God could give to them the precious gift of His Peace, Shalom, wholeness – an assurance that they had a future.

Relationships change at times of loss and the loss of a close relationship is one of the hardest losses to cope with but it is one that God understands and wants to support us through. In recent weeks across the circuit there have been many bereavements with the death of family members and close friends. The pain of loss is immense for the love was great; we can feel lost and bereft of hope but Jesus is there for us all offering to us what we need the assurance of his love, the strength and power of the Holy Spirit and the Shalom, peace of His grace and the fellowship of one another is part of that healing process. Whatever your loss Christ remains with you, seen or unseen, felt or not, but ever present..

StF 638 – Through all the changing scenes of life

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| 1) Through all the changing scenes of life,
In trouble and in joy,
The praises of my God shall still
My heart and tongue employ. | 2) Of his deliverance I will boast,
Till all that are distressed
From my example comfort take,
And charm their griefs to rest. |
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- 3) O magnify the Lord with me,
With me exalt his name;
When in distress to him I called,
He to my rescue came.
- 4) The hosts of God encamp around
The dwellings of the just;
Deliverance he affords to all
Who on his succour trust.

- 5) O make but trial of his love;
Experience will decide
How blest are they, and only they,
Who in his truth confide.
- 6) Fear him, ye saints, and you will then
Have nothing else to fear;
Make you his service your delight,
Your wants shall be his care.

Nahum Tate and Nicholas Brady

Prayers of Intercession

Think of the street on which you live - is there a need to bring to God?...

Think of the community in which you live – pray for the community leaders...

Think of the country in which you live – what is your biggest concern for it? Place it before God...

Think of a country around the world with which you have a special link or affinity – share it with God...

Think of a situation around the world that is on your heart – share it with God...

Think of the Church around the world seeking to express the love of God where it is...

Remember the nature of our God and place all needs into his ultimate being.

We join our silent thoughts and prayers in the words Jesus gave us as we say:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

StF 545 – Be thou my vision

- 1) Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
Be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;
Be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
Both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.
- 2) Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
Be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;
Be thou my great Father, thy child let me be;
Be thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.
- 3) Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
Be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
Be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.
- 4) Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise:
Be thou mine inheritance now and always, -
Be thou and thou only the first in my heart:
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.
- 5) High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,
O grant me its joys after vict'ry is won;
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Irish 8th Century translated by Mary Elizabeth Byrne, versified by Eleanor Henrietta Hall

Dismissal

Go from this place in the sure and certain knowledge that the crucified, risen and ascended Lord is with us to truly bless us in times of change and in times of constancy. **Amen**