

# 16<sup>th</sup> October 2022 – Morning Service

Olwen Meller

## Call to Worship

Our call to worship today is some words from the book of Joshua “If you are not willing to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord”

## StF 6 – Father we love you

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| 1) Father, we love you,<br>We worship and adore You,<br>Glorify Your name in<br>all the earth.<br>Glorify Your name,<br>Glorify Your name,<br>Glorify Your name in<br>all the earth. | 2) Jesus, we love You,<br>We worship and adore You,<br>Glorify Your name in<br>all the earth.<br>Glorify Your name,<br>Glorify Your name,<br>Glorify Your name in<br>all the earth. | 3) Spirit, we love You,<br>We worship and adore You,<br>Glorify Your name in<br>all the earth.<br>Glorify Your name,<br>Glorify Your name,<br>Glorify Your name in<br>all the earth. |
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## Opening Prayer

Holy God, for all of your creation we praise you - for the mind bending curves of space and time and for the sturdy simplicity of a blade of grass, for your care and correction through Covenant and Law and through priest and prophet. We praise you for your love now which prepares the way for us today and helps us see more clearly.

Merciful God, we praise you for your love shown to us in Jesus and we rejoice in his coming to share our life. We give thanks for his redeeming death and cling to the hope offered by his resurrection. We praise you for the example of Jesus and that his living, dying and rising prepares the way for us to come into your presence, and learn to love you more dearly.

Mighty God, we praise you for coming to us in the Holy Spirit, uniting us in fellowship, inspiring our worship, guiding our lives and preparing the way for us so that we may follow you more nearly day by day.  
**Amen.**

## Prayer of Confession

Loving God, we confess that we are not the people you would have us to be. We do not love you with our whole heart and we do not love our neighbour as ourselves. Forgive us for all our shortcomings and renew us with your Holy Spirit. In Jesus name we ask it. **Amen.**

## Reading: Psalm 1

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers.

Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

## StF 544 – As the deer pants for the water

- 1) As the deer pants for the water,  
So my soul longs after You.  
You alone are my heart's desire  
And I long to worship You.
- 2) I want You more than gold or silver,  
Only You can satisfy.  
You alone are the real joy-giver  
And the apple of my eye.
- Ch) *You alone are my strength, my shield,  
To You alone may my spirit yield.  
You alone are my heart's desire  
And I long to worship You.*
- 3) You're my Friend and You are my Brother,  
Even though You are a King.  
I love You more than any other,  
So much more than anything.

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## Reading: Mark 9:30-37

They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.' But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the road?' But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, 'Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.' He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.'

## Reflection

This reading seems to suggest that, for Christians, ambition is a dirty word. It is condemned by Jesus - and in a reading we will hear later - by St James. But if we look into the readings it is not ambition that is condemned - it is false ambition. Ambition in itself is a good thing as long as it doesn't get out of hand but some people are so driven by ambition that they are consumed by it and whilst they may be successful, sometimes they leave a trail of broken relationships behind them. Those who are consumed by ambition often sacrifice everything to attain the goal of success. They neglect their own personal development, they neglect family life, relationships - and even life itself.

It is good to have goals - to want to succeed in business or in a career - as long as it's not a question of succeeding at all costs. Jesus said 'What good will it do a man to gain the whole world if he loses himself in the process.' In today's gospel we have an example of false ambition. Here we see the apostles fighting over who would be first in Jesus' kingdom. False ambition creates conflict and division and damage in the community and so Jesus gave them a lecture on the meaning of true greatness. He didn't tell them that they should not seek greatness in his kingdom, He just showed them where true greatness was to be found. It is to be found in serving others, especially the weaker members of the community. He didn't abolish ambition, He redefined it as a desire to serve.

Service implies that you're not just there for yourself, you have to be there for others. A servant has to get used to being taken for granted and that's not very popular today. I'm sure that all of us - at some time or another - have felt taken for granted. Society has become very materialistic and individualist and yet the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work at something that is worth doing rather than simply self-interest. Jesus said that whoever wants to be first must place himself last of all and be the servant of all. Then he took a child and made him stand in front of them. He put his arms around him and said to them 'Whoever welcomes in my name one of these children welcomes me - and whoever welcomes me welcomes him who sent me'.

When Nelson Mandela was a student lawyer in Johannesburg he had a friend whose name was Paul Mahabane. Mahabane was a member of the African National Congress - the ANC - and had the reputation of being a radical. One day they were standing outside their local post office when the local magistrate - a white man in his sixties - approached Mahabane and asked him to go inside and buy him some stamps. It was quite common in those days for a white person to call upon a black person to perform a chore. Mahabane refused and the magistrate was offended. His face turned red with anger. 'Do you not know who I am?' he asked. 'It is not necessary to know who you are,' Mahabane replied, 'I know what you are.' The magistrate boiled over with rage and said, 'You will pay dearly for this' and then walked away. The white man was convinced that he was superior to Mahabane simply because he was a magistrate and it was clear that it had become second nature to him to expect others, especially black people, to serve him.

We tend to define and evaluate people by the jobs that they do. So if we learn, for instance, that a person is a doctor or a lawyer then they go up in our estimation. But if we learn that a person is what we might call an ordinary worker then we don't see them the same light. But how silly is that? I'm sure we are all guilty of it but the most important thing is the kind of human being behind the job. A few months ago we were chatting to my son about his job and we asked him whether he had ever thought of applying to become a QC and he said, 'Not really because if I became a QC, although I could earn more money, I would not be able to do the work I am doing now. I would have to take on more prestigious cases. Whereas I want to be able to help the sort of people that I help now.' He has always been for the 'under-dog' and he does lots of human rights work involved with housing and is over the moon when things turn out well for the poor individual he is representing.

The mistake that the apostles made was to put the job or the position first. In their eyes the greatest among them was the one who had the highest position. They obviously thought that Jesus would set up an earthly kingdom and so each one wanted to get a top position in that kingdom. But Jesus told them that his kingdom was not about seeking honour or glory for oneself but about serving others. If they were prepared to serve others then by all means they could have a top place in his kingdom. But they would not be sitting on high chairs or soft seats. They were more likely to be down on their knees with a bowl of water and a towel 'washing the feet of the little ones' - the weakest members of the community.

It's not what we do, but what we are that is important. Our self worth should not depend on the work that we do. We can all have an attitude of self worth and accomplishment regardless of what we do or did for living. There is a lot of talk nowadays about the importance of self esteem, but if we want to feel proud of ourselves we've got to do things we can be proud of. Ambition in itself is a good thing. The question is, what are we to be ambitious about? St Paul says be ambitious for the higher gifts and the greatest of these is love. Lord fill our hearts with your love so that we may be capable of serving others and this service will guarantee us a place in your kingdom. **Amen.**

### **StF 664 – Lord you call us to your service**

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| 1) Lord, you call us to your service,<br>Each in our own way.<br>Some to caring, loving, healing;<br>Some to preach, or pray;<br>Some to work with quiet learning,<br>Truth discerning, day by day. | 3) Seeing life from your perspective<br>Makes your challenge plain,<br>As your heart is grieving over<br>Those who live in pain.<br>Teach us how, by our compassion,<br>You may fashion hope again. |
| 2) Life for us is always changing<br>In the work we share.<br>Christian love adds new dimensions<br>To the way we care.<br>For we know that you could lead us,<br>As you need us, anywhere.         | 4) Lord, we set our human limits<br>On the work we do.<br>Send us your directing Spirit,<br>Pour your power through,<br>That we may be free in living<br>And in giving all for you.                 |

## Prayers of Intercession

We are told that those who serve are the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, so let us pray to God for our own needs, the needs the Church and the needs of the world.

We pray, O God, for the Church of Christ throughout the world, for the leaders that they may perform their ministry with gentleness and concern for others. We pray especially for the Ministers in our own Circuit and for those who have recently taken up new roles at the beginning of another Methodist Year. May they feel welcomed by their new congregations and may they carry out their ministry with love and care for their members.

We pray for those in positions of authority in society, that they may put the service of others before personal ambition and so we pray for our own local government and for our own local community.

We pray too, O God, for those who are suffering in the cause of right, that they may be strong. We pray especially today for the people of Ukraine and also the people of Russia. We pray too for the women of Iran who are fighting for their human rights and for the girls of Afghanistan who are not allowed to go to school simply because they are female.

We ask your blessing Lord on all who do menial jobs that they may receive a just reward for their labours and for those who have no work, for whatever reason, that they may, with the help available, sustain their families. And we pray for our own special needs and the needs of those known to us. We ask that you be with us all in the coming days.

God of mercy, fill our hearts with your love. Give us the grace to rise above our human weakness and keep us faithful to you and to one another. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## 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.**

## Reading: James 3

Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing.

My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig-tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such 'wisdom' does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

### **StF 662 – Have you heard God's voice**

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| 1) Have you heard God's voice;<br>Has your heart been stirred?<br>Are you still prepared to follow?<br>Have you made a choice to remain and serve,<br>Though the way be rough and narrow? | 3) In your city streets will you be God's heart?<br>Will you listen to the voiceless?<br>Will you stop and eat, and when<br>friendships start,<br>Will you share your faith with the faithless? |
| <i>Ch) Will you walk the path that will cost you much<br/>And embrace the pain and sorrow?<br/>Will you trust in One who entrusts to you<br/>The disciples of tomorrow?</i>               | 4) Will you watch the news with the eyes of faith<br>And believe it could be different?<br>Will you share your views using words of grace?<br>Will you leave a thoughtful imprint?              |
| 2) Will you use your voice; will you not sit down<br>When the multitudes are silent?<br>Will you make a choice to stand your ground<br>When the crowds are turning violent?               | <i>E) We will walk the path that will cost us much<br/>And embrace the pain and sorrow.<br/>We will trust in One who entrusts to us<br/>The disciples of tomorrow.</i>                          |

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### **Blessing**

May the Lord help you grow in His love, so that you may live a life worthy of the calling He has given you.  
May the Lord bless you with a joyful spirit and a loving heart.  
And may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you now and for evermore.  
**Amen.**