

# 21<sup>st</sup> March 2021 – Morning Service

## Jesus making disciples

Rev Michael Payne

### Call to Worship

And Jesus said, “For I must stay at your house today.” Lord as we come to worship we come into your house, your place as your guests. As we meet with you in this time may we receive what you give with gratitude and appreciation for you know our needs more fully than we know our own.

### StF 34 – O worship the Lord

- 1) O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,  
Bow down before him, his glory proclaim -  
With gold of obedience and incense of lowliness,  
Kneel and adore him: the Lord is his name.
- 2) Low at his feet lay your burden of carefulness,  
High on his heart he will bear it for you,  
Comfort your sorrows, and answer  
your prayerfulness,  
Showing the pathway your feet should pursue.
- 3) Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness  
Of the poor wealth you would count as  
your own.  
Truth in its beauty, and love in its tenderness,  
These are the offerings to bring to his throne.
- 4) These, though we bring them in trembling  
and fearfulness,  
He will accept for the name that is dear;  
Mornings of joy give for evenings  
of tearfulness,  
Trust for our trembling, and hope for our fear.
- 5) O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,  
Bow down before him, his glory proclaim;  
With gold of obedience and incense  
of lowliness,  
Kneel and adore him: the Lord is his name.

*John Samuel Bewley Monsell CCL No. 515642*

### Prayer of Praise, Adoration & Confession

Father, we praise you as God of Creation; for making humankind in your image. We praise you for the way you have continued to touch and change the lives of people throughout the centuries. You desire the best for us where we can so often settle for good, second-best by not realising there is more for us be it in our daily living or our experience of worship and service.

We praise you that as our Creator you desire to recreate us in Christ; his life demonstrated how we can live in fellowship with you and his death and resurrection has dealt with all that can make our lives less whole. We praise you that you are constantly opening new opportunities for us to grow as to serve; new challenges to meet and new concerns to respond to.

We praise you for the gift of your Spirit through whom you call and enable us for renewal in all our life. We praise you for the hope, joy, faith you have given us and for your love which surrounds us. We praise you for the purpose you have put within creation and the purpose you have for each person; that nothing will ever stop you loving or overcome your grace.

You desire to lift us from despair and give more reason for us to worship that our words and deeds may be expressions of you glory. Our worship we bring and offer in the name of the one who desires to make all things new, Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord. **Amen**

God of purpose, we recognise that there are many occasions when we seek our purpose when it is not in line with yours. We express frustration and anger instead of patience and trust; we express bitterness and jealousy rather than hope and gratitude; hate and envy rather than love and acceptance of others. Meet with us Lord in this moment, by your Spirit continue to transform, renew and reform us as you forgive our sins and extend you grace ever deeper into our being as we recognize the deeper needs within ourselves.  
**Amen**

### **Reading: Luke 19:1-10 Jesus and Zacchaeus**

He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.' So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, 'He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.' Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, 'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.'

### **StF 513 – Take this moment**

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| 1) Take this moment, sign, and space;<br>Take my friends around;<br>Here among us make the place<br>Where your love is found. | 4) Take the little child in me,<br>Scared of growing old;<br>Help me here to find my worth<br>Made in Christ's own mould. |
| 2) Take the time to call my name,<br>Take the time to mend<br>Who I am and what I've been,<br>All I've failed to tend.        | 5) Take my talents, take my skills,<br>Take what's yet to be;<br>Let my life be yours, and yet,<br>Let it still be me.    |
| 3) Take the tiredness of my days,<br>Take my past regret,<br>Letting your forgiveness touch<br>All I can't forget.            |   |

*John L Bell & Graham Maule © 1989 WGRG, Iona Community CCL No. 515642*

### **Sermon: Zacchaeus – God's new creation**

A couple of weeks ago I was leading an online service on the Kinver Methodist Church YouTube Channel. The Theme was Breaking Bread which also touched on Eating Together. Eating is important to us for living. On a day out with friends a number of years ago we worked out when we were going to eat – morning coffee, lunch, afternoon tea, evening meal – once they were arranged everything else would be fitted around, there are some things that have to be seen as priority.

Eating together is the practise of family and friends; you rarely eat with a stranger but sometimes it happens and it can be very enriching. A number of years ago Anita and I were in Singapore for a couple of days on our way home from the Southern Hemisphere. We found ourselves on a Sunday lunchtime in a market area, a bit like the Eat Central Zone in the Merry Hill Centre. A "bit like" is an exaggeration I suppose all it had in common was there being a variety of food stalls serving a variety of different styles of food. What it didn't have was a sense of an organized dining area in the centre.

We both chose what we wanted to eat from two different stalls and found a place to sit and eat. We found ourselves seated with a youngish couple and their 2 daughters who were in party clothes. In our conversation it came out that they had been to a Presbyterian church for worship and later on the girls were going to a party. At one point the husband got up and left the table; when he returned he brought back a large plate of fresh fruit pieces and jelly and invited us to join with them in this part of the meal. It felt lovely to be eating amongst local people, where the locals eat, and joining with a family in their meal-time and sharing in the eating of their food. To be included is important yet many find themselves excluded by society and even the church for a variety of reasons.

This story of Zacchaeus is one many people know well from Sunday School days. At that point we would have sung a song and focused upon a little man and a tree but did we ever get to the real heart of the story in our minds as children? The story Luke tells is about life transformation. Zacchaeus was a person not normally included in gatherings. The tax collector the world over is not the most popular person on the planet and never has it been any different. Jesus wanted to include Zacchaeus to such an extent that Jesus invited himself to the home of Zacchaeus for a meal. That meal was a turning point in the life of this man; we do not know what Jesus said to him but whatever it was it hit home and made Zacchaeus think seriously about his life. I don't think Jesus told him to stop being a tax collector but Zac got the message that he had to be an honest person and not defraud other people whatever he was doing. Zacchaeus wanted to restore to people that which he had taken. He wasn't bothered about wealth and wallet any longer for he had found something far more important; Salvation, healing, restoration, true self-value through being valued by another.

It is the lost and broken that need finding and healing. The lost and broken is not the sole domain of the poor and outcast but is the domain of all people outside of God. All outside of God need to hear the message and find an opportunity to be new creations. Go and make disciples was the commission of Christ to his disciples at the end of his earthly time it did not distinguish between social situations. In Matthew 16:18 we read– “You are Peter, and on this Rock I will build my Church”. Jesus builds the church whilst we are commissioned to make disciples – how often we get it the other way around; we want to build the church and expect Jesus to make disciples as Rev Andrew Roberts points out in his original Holy Habits book. Making disciples has perhaps, at its simplest, two parts; the start of the journey, and the growth in the journey. Jesus at the Great Commission, as we call it, said, “Go and make disciples of all nations. Baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Teaching them to obey all the things that I have commanded you.” (Matt 28:19-20) A disciple is a follower – there is the need to start following, and then for growth in that pursuit to happen.

Zacchaeus we see at the beginning of his discipleship journey; it was just the start of his journey we do not know what happened in the following weeks. As with many of the encounters Jesus had with people we see little of the later days. I have for a long time wanted to have a conversation with the man we call Bartimaeus about how his life progressed after receiving back his sight. Those who encountered Jesus had a choice about how they responded. We are to be part of the Jesus encounter for other people. The model of eating with others, as Jesus did, is worth pursuing not just as a “conversion encounter” but as growth encounters.

Some of the most effective outreach projects, including Alpha and Messy Church, are based around food. Food has an important place in daily living. In the growth as disciples what we do need is to make sure we feed on the Bread of Life, Jesus; and encourage others to do likewise. Getting to know each other within the fellowship is also of importance as we grow in faith and trust and the sharing in food can enhance that. In previous churches I have ministered in we ate on many occasions;- Mission meals;; taste of evenings; poetry, prose and potatoes. Food can open the mouth and the mind as we engage in conversation. Another Church I know of had a supper club where you meet different people each month for a meal.

But with all this eating are dealing with another important issue? What about Healthy eating – is there a message we could give here? In many church halls the largest, or perhaps should I say, best attended gathering is Slimming world or Weight Watchers. For many healthy eating and weight-loss have become an important issue. There has been discussion and debate around Obesity and Covid being a dangerous combination; it has been seen by many as contributing to the high mortality rate in the UK. Some argue against this but having lost a fair amount of weight recently I feel better for it.

What can we as God's people say on such matters? Are we purely concerned with the spiritual or does the physical matter? Jesus was concerned with the whole person and so should we be. A few years ago we started looking at what is a healthy church in terms of Church welcome and activity but is it time to look at Healthy Church in a different way – Physical, Mental and Spiritual health. People are more conscious of well-being than in years gone by and this has been especially true in the last few months. Is this something we need to explore further as Church Post-Covid. Is healthy church a term we need to embrace in its fullest sense as we seek to be the embodiment of Christ to the world? Is it a place where we can meet the world with a theme that many are looking at? God who cares for our spirit cares for the whole person a message the world needs to hear.

### **StF 553 – I am a new creation**

I am a new creation,  
No more in condemnation,  
Here in the grace of God I stand.  
My heart is overflowing,  
My love just keeps on growing,  
Here in the grace of God I stand.

And I will praise You Lord,  
Yes I will praise You Lord  
And I will sing of all that You have done.  
A joy that knows no limit,  
A lightness in my spirit,  
Here in the grace of God I stand.

*Dave Biblborough © 1983 Thankyou Music CCL No. 515642*

### **Prayers of Thanksgiving & Intercession**

Lord, our Father, we thank you for your Son; for his faithfulness to the task you gave him, for his obedience to your will for his life; for the way he called ordinary people to be disciples, followers and gave to them roles and purpose in this world. We thank you for those who in future generations have been faithful to their calling and I particular we given thanks for those who in their discipleship have helped us to grow closer to you in our daily living. We thank you for the words of scripture, the guidance of your Spirit and the experience of faith in others that have brought us to where we are and that there is still more to come in experiencing love and grace.

In this moment as we give thanks we remember those who are struggling with the matters of daily living. We remember those who live in areas of conflict, much of which has been kept from our awareness by a concern for the Covid situation in our own community.

We pray for those in Yemen and Mozambique.

We remember those who are enduring times of illness and pain; we remember those ill with Covid 19 and those whose treatment has been delayed by the immense effort that has had to be put into the care and protection of people around the world due to coronavirus pandemic.

We pray for those bereaved in recent weeks through many situations may they in your mourning know your presence.

We pray for those seeking direction in this life, where the events of the last 12 months have caused them to think seriously about purpose and meaning in life.

We pray for your church that we may fulfil our calling to make disciples as we share your love in our daily living and declare your gospel in deed and word.

We pause in Silence and bring the concerns of our hearts and minds before God.....

We bring our prayers together in the Words Jesus gave his disciples.

### **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 78 – Give thanks**

Give thanks with a grateful heart,  
Give thanks to the Holy One,  
Give thanks because He's given  
Jesus Christ, His Son.

And now let the weak say 'I am strong',  
Let the poor say 'I am rich',  
Because of what the Lord has done for us.

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### **Dismissal & Blessing**

We go from here, having received of your grace Lord Jesus. May we give of what we have received and in the giving know more of your blessing for we go in the name of You our God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit whose presence is always a blessing. **Amen.**