

31st August 2025 – Morning Service

Martyn Filsak

Call to Worship – Psalm 18:30

The way of God is blameless. The Lord's word has stood the test. He is a shield to all who take refuge in him.

StF 677 – Christ is made the sure foundation

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| 1) Christ is made the sure foundation,
Christ the head and cornerstone,
chosen of the Lord and precious,
binding all the church in one;
holy Zion's help forever,
and her confidence alone. | 3) Here vouchsafe to all thy servants
what they ask of thee to gain,
what they gain from thee forever
with the blessed to retain,
and hereafter in thy glory
evermore with thee to reign. |
| 2) To this temple, where we call thee,
come, O Lord of hosts, today:
with thy wonted loving-kindness
hear thy people as they pray;
and thy fullest benediction
shed within its walls away. | 4) Praise and honour to the Father,
Praise and honour to the Son,
Praise and honour to the Spirit,
ever Three and ever One,
One in might, and One in glory,
while unending ages run. |

John Mason Neale

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

We bless the Lord with all of our soul. Lord our God, your greatness is seen in the whole world. You have spread out the skies in all of their splendour. Stars and galaxies give you praise. Sun and clouds remind us of your beauty. You are enthroned in glory and honour above the heavens.

The earth speaks forth your goodness. You provide for people and animals alike. The hedgerows give forth their fruit and the fields their bounty.

You have sent your Son to be our Saviour and our righteousness, and your Spirit to be our strength and companion. You meet all of our needs. We give you our worship and adoration, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. May the words of our mouths and the thoughts of our hearts be acceptable to you. **Amen.**

Lord, we thank you that we can be assured that, trusting in Jesus to be our Saviour, we are righteous in your sight through the goodness of Christ. Yet we are aware of our sins and shortcomings. In so many ways we get it wrong. Forgive us for our tainted attitudes when we think ourselves superior to others. Forgive us for our words when they are selfish, or for our lack of speech when we withhold a word of encouragement. Forgive us for our deeds when they are hurtful to others and for our omissions when we fail to carry out something that you have told us to do.

Our transgressions and failures have been dealt with on the cross. Hear then the words of grace: our sins are forgiven! Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

StF 331 – King of Kings, Majesty

- 1) King of Kings, majesty.
God of heaven living in me,
Gentle Saviour, closest friend,
Strong deliverer, beginning and end,
All within me falls at Your throne.
- 2) Earth and heaven worship You,
Love eternal, faithful and true,
Who bought the nations, ransomed souls,
Brought this sinner near to Your throne;
All within me cries out in praise.

*Ch) Your majesty, I can but bow.
I lay my all before You now.
In royal robes I don't deserve
I live to serve Your majesty.*

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Reading: Proverbs 25: 6-7 (NIV)

Do not exalt yourself in the king's presence, and do not claim a place among his great men; it is better for him to say to you, "Come up here," than for him to humiliate you before his nobles.

StF 565 – Only by grace can we enter

Only by grace can we enter, Only by grace can we stand; Not by our human endeavour, But by the blood of the Lamb. Into Your presence You call us, You call us to come. Into Your presence You draw us, And now by Your grace we come, Now by Your grace we come.	Lord if You mark our transgressions, Who would stand? Thanks to Your grace we are cleansed By the blood of the Lamb. Lord if You mark our transgressions, Who would stand? Thanks to Your grace we are cleansed By the blood of the Lamb.
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Reading: Luke 14: 1-14 (NIV)

One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. There in front of him was a man suffering from abnormal swelling of his body. Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him on his way.

Then he asked them, "If one of you has a child[a] or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?" And they had nothing to say.

When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honour at the table, he told them this parable: "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honour, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this person your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honoured in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbours; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Sermon

“Genuine humility... and how I achieved it”, would make a wonderfully contradictory title for this message. Paradoxically anyone who claims to have arrived at true humility almost certainly hasn’t. The only human being who can genuinely make this claim is the perfect Saviour himself, who says that he is gentle and humble in heart (Matthew 11:29).

The Bible has a lot to say about humility, but to understand its importance let’s look at the alternative: pride. I’m not talking about the kind of pride that a parent might have in a child’s achievement or good character, but the kind that denies its need of God. The pride to be avoided is the sort that draws attention to oneself and exalts the proud person above others. Jesus told a parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector: the Pharisee has every reason to congratulate himself: he doesn’t steal from others or cheat on his wife, and he is definitely not like the tax collector praying next to him, who doesn’t even look up to heaven but asks God for mercy. Jesus commends the tax collector, not the Pharisee, and states that people who exalt themselves will be humbled but those who humble themselves will be exalted.

The main problem with pride is that it kids us that we can be good enough on our own merit to be entitled to God’s blessings. It does away with our need for repentance and asking for mercy. It alleviates the apparent necessity for an atoning sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins. It prevents us from being aware of our own need of a Saviour and stops us therefore from seeking God. If we think that we don’t need forgiveness, or that we can somehow earn our way into God’s good books, then we will miss the way of salvation by grace through faith in Christ. The gospel works the other way around: through faith in Christ we receive grace and forgiveness. This then results in the fruit of good works, not in order to be saved but because we are being saved by grace!

In the gospel reading, Jesus gives us some clues about what genuine humility looks like. Let us this morning explore what humility is.

First of all, let us knock over some things that humility is not!

Humility is not putting oneself down. It isn’t thinking or speaking badly of ourselves. It’s not a matter of generalising our individual failures into sweeping negativity about our lives. It isn’t deliberately failing to acknowledge our own gifts and talents that God has given us. It’s not humble to be reluctant to receive from others, whether gifts or compliments. In some ways, pride can be the reason for these apparent shows of “humility”.

Let’s unpack that a little. If we think badly of ourselves or fail to acknowledge our God-given abilities, we might actually be saying that we think that God hasn’t done a good job in making us! Beware especially of general negative statements about ourselves such as “I always mess things up” or “I’m incompetent”. This is actually dangerous because it is disagreeing with what God says about us in the Bible. He says that we are precious and honoured in his sight (Isaiah 43:4). “But I really did screw up,” you say. Well, congratulations, you’re part of the human race! You made a mistake. In that case just be realistic about yourself. Acknowledge the mistake for what it is, a particular instance, and say “I got it wrong this time, but with God’s help I’m learning to do better.” It’s humility to acknowledge the good things that God has made in us and give him the glory for it. We can be confident that God will help us to fulfil our calling. Our confidence is not in ourselves but in the Lord who made us and put competence within us! You can’t get any more realistic than by believing what God says about you.

It’s realistic to acknowledge that we cannot be saved by our own goodness, so accept the free and gracious gift of salvation and forgiveness that was bought by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. This is the starting point for moving on, learning about how much you mean to God, and journeying in true humility.

Let us move on to our gospel passage. Here Jesus displays confidence in his proper understanding of the Jewish law of the Sabbath, unlike that of his audience, the Pharisees and teachers of the Law, who couldn’t answer Jesus’ question “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” Jesus heals the man regardless of what his hearers may have thought. The welfare of a fellow human being was more important to him than what

others may have thought of Jesus. True humility recognises that people-pleasing is not of great importance, provided that we are doing God's work in God's way.

Jesus then provides two illustrations to help us understand virtue. He tells his hearers not to seek the places of honour at table when they are invited to a wedding feast. Here's the point: truly humble people don't need the recognition of others. It's nice to have, but it's not a necessity. If you seek it you will not achieve it, but if you are secure enough in yourself to take a low place then you will be lifted up to a higher place. If you know who you are in Christ and truly understand how much God loves you, then human opinions aren't going to matter so much.

Jesus' second illustration is about hosting a banquet and who to invite. Jesus says invite those who are not able to pay you back. Let God take care of the payback.

Many of us will remember the TV sitcom "Keeping up Appearances". The main character, Hyacinth Bucket (pronounced, so she says, "Bouquet"), played by Patricia Routledge, loved to host little "soirees", candlelight suppers, and invite anyone that she thought might be vaguely connected with the nobility. This is quite the opposite of what Jesus is advocating here. Now, you might not be a person who likes to give banquets or you may not be in a position to do so, but there is a general principle here. Don't simply import the world's values into your life and give different levels of respect to people based on outward characteristics such as wealth and status, or lack of such. If you are at work then clearly it's important to respect the management, but how do you treat the cleaner? Try making a special effort to acknowledge the importance of those who work behind the scenes and aren't paid much. Make the cleaner feel special, and the caretaker, and the person who cleans the windows. God cares about how we treat people and is pleased when we give honour to those that the world treats as unimportant. Perhaps next time you are in a shop make a special effort to say something kind to the person checking out your purchases, who might have had a difficult shift. You could make that person's day!

Much more could be said about humility of which there is not time or space here. In brief, here are just a few examples:

Humble people forgive wrongs quickly. Humble people are almost impossible to offend. They are generous in time, kindness, words and deeds because they show gratitude for what God has done for them. They can work and be successful but not be too bothered if someone else gets the credit, because they acknowledge that God is the just rewarder. They are able to rejoice when others are happy or successful. They can let others shine. They can listen to a person telling a joke that they have heard before and of which they already know the punchline, and not interrupt. They don't compare themselves overmuch with others or complain when others get what they don't have, because they trust in God's wisdom for their lives. They can enjoy the benefits of others' talents even if they aren't competent in those areas themselves.

For the term "humble people" in the list above, you can substitute "people who are secure in God", because that's where it begins. Put Christ at the centre of our lives and the rest falls into place.

StF 556 – Just as I am

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| 1) Just as I am, without one plea
But that you died and set me free,
And at your bidding, 'Come to me!'
O Lamb of God, I come! | 4) Just as I am - your love unknown
Has broken every barrier down -
Now to be yours, yes, yours alone,
O Lamb of God, I come! |
| 2) Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings within and fear without,
O Lamb of God, I come! | 5) Just as I am, of that free love
The breadth, length, depth, and height to prove,
Here for a season, then above,
O Lamb of God, I come! |

3) Just as I am, you will receive,
Will welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because your promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come!

Charlotte Elliott

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Lord God, we thank you that through our faith in Christ, the perfect servant and holy sacrifice, we are assured that we belong to you forever and nothing shall snatch us out of your hand. We thank you that we are given belonging and purpose in your Kingdom and that we will be with you forever. **Amen.**

You call us to stand in the gap for your world, so we pray for the nations of our globe, that you will grant them good governance in order that all people would be able to live in peace and prosperity. At this time we see many conflicts, and we pray that they will end, for you are the God who makes wars to cease in all the earth. We pray for the peace of Jerusalem, Israel, Gaza and the whole Middle East. We pray for Ukraine and Russia to make peace. We remember our Christian brothers and sisters in many countries who are persecuted for their faith, and ask that you strengthen and protect them, and bring others to Christ through their witness. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our own rulers to have reverence for God and to act in love and courage for what is right. We pray for the church in our nation to stand up against worldly ideas that oppose truth, and proclaim the authentic Gospel of Christ. We pray for congregations in our locality to work together in the unity that the Holy Spirit gives. Protect and strengthen our leaders in Christ. As we begin a new Methodist year with a new District and a new Circuit Superintendent, grant us the courage to embrace change, leave behind practices that no longer work, and move forward in the power of the Holy Spirit. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the needs of individuals and families, some in our churches and others outside, some known to us personally but all known and loved by you. We remember those who are suffering through physical or mental illness, people who are grieving, those needing wisdom and people facing difficult challenges. We offer their situations to you, knowing that you have the resources to meet every need from your riches in glory. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Merciful Father, accept our prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **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.**

StF 443 – Come let us sing of a wonderful love

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| 1) Come, let us sing of a wonderful love,
Tender and true;
Out of the heart of the Father above,
Streaming to me and to you:
Wonderful love
Dwells in the heart of the Father above. | 3) Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;
Why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
Home, weary wanderer, home!
Wonderful love
Dwells in the heart of the Father above. |
| 2) Jesus, the Saviour, this gospel to tell,
Joyfully came;
Came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,
Sharing their sorrow and shame;
Seeking the lost,
Saving, redeeming at measureless cost. | 4) Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love,
Come and abide,
Lifting my life, till it rises above
Envy and falsehood and pride,
Seeking to be
Lowly and humble, a learner of thee. |

Robert Walmsley

Blessing

Go in peace, knowing how precious you are to God, to love and serve to God's glory.

The blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be amongst us and remain with us now and forevermore. **Amen.**