

4th May 2025 – Morning Service

What Jesus did next

Megan Ashmore

Call to Worship - Revelation 5:11-14

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, singing with full voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing!" Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing, "To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever!" And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the elders fell down and worshipped.

We praise and worship our living Lord, who loves us so much that he sent his only son to die for our sins that we may have eternal life. Jesus is Lord! Let us praise him with alleluias as we sing our first hymn:

StF 353 – Jesus is Lord!

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| 1) Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it,
For by his power each tree and flower
was planned and made.
Jesus is Lord! The universe declares it;
Sun, moon and stars in heaven cry: Jesus is Lord! | 2) Jesus is Lord! Yet from his throne eternal
In flesh he came to die in pain on Calvary's tree.
Jesus is Lord! From him all life proceeding -
Yet gave his life a ransom, thus setting us free: |
| Ch) <i>Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord!
Praise him with alleluias, for Jesus is Lord!</i> | 3) Jesus is Lord! O'er sin the mighty conqueror,
From death he rose; and all his foes
shall own his name.
Jesus is Lord! God sends his Holy Spirit
To show by works of power that Jesus is Lord: |

David John Mansell © 1980 Springtide

Prayer of Praise, Adoration and Thanks

Almighty, majestic, creator God, we praise and adore you.

Your power is awesome – for you created the heavens and the earth; the waters and the land; the seasons and the days; flora and fauna; providing us with all that we need to live.

Your wisdom is great – for you know exactly what we need before we know it ourselves. You lead us and guide us; provide shelter and rest; offer strength and comfort, and shepherd us all our lives until we are safe and finally home.

Your love is deep – for you sent your only son, our saviour, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for our sins. You call us your children and allow us to call you Father.

Your mercy is boundless – for no matter how many times we stray away like lost sheep, stumbling and falling by the wayside, you will listen when we pray to you for forgiveness, and you will set us back on the path of righteousness.

Living God, we thank you for the empty tomb, the folded grave clothes and the witnesses of the resurrected Christ that declare hope and forgiveness to all who believe. Jesus is Lord – let all creation praise your Holy name. **Amen.**

The set psalm for today is Psalm 30. This is a version written by Moira Laidlaw, which is followed by a prayer, also written by her in response to the psalm.

Reading: Psalm 30

I will praise you, O God, for you have lifted me up and have given my enemies no cause to rejoice.
Hearing my cries for help, you healed me; bringing me from the very depths of hell, you restored my life.
Let all faithful people give thanks, and praise God's holy name.
For your anger, O God, lasts but a moment, while your graciousness lasts a lifetime.
Weeping lingers for a night, but joy comes with the morning.
You have transformed my life from mourning to joy, making my spirit dance and my heart sing.
May our praise never be silenced as we give thanks, and praise God for ever and ever.

Prayer

God of healing and wholeness, we come with thanksgiving in our hearts for all the evidence of your goodness and mercy - found not only in stories of old, but in lives today. Lives bruised with tragedy find consolation when touched by your gracious Spirit; lives scarred with suffering and rejection have hope renewed through the power of the living Christ. We praise and adore you for hearts and lives transformed by your grace and mercy and we pray that our lives will reflect your great acts of kindness. Arouse in us we pray, a love like yours so that we reach out to this wounded and troubled world with the compassion of Christ, proclaiming the gospel with integrity to friends and strangers alike. This we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

StF 295 – Alleluia, Alleluia

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| Ch) Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord,
Alleluia, alleluia, give praise to his name. | 3) We have been crucified with Christ;
Now we shall live for ever: |
| 1) Jesus is Lord of all the earth;
He is the King of creation: | 4) God has proclaimed the just reward:
New life for all! Alleluia! |
| 2) Spread the good news o'er all the earth:
Jesus has died and has risen: | 5) Come, let us praise the living God,
Joyfully sing to our Saviour: |

Donald Fishel © The Word of God

Reading: John 21: 1 – 14

Afterwards Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. 'I'm going out to fish,' Simon Peter told them, and they said, 'We'll go with you.' So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus. He called out to them, 'Friends, haven't you any fish?' 'No,' they answered. He said, 'Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.' When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, 'It is the Lord,' he wrapped his outer garment round him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred metres. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish you have just caught.' So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' None of the disciples dared ask him, 'Who are you?' They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Poem

Working as a fisherman, I've got blisters on my hands.
We've been fishing through the night; Yet there are no fish in sight.
Someone standing on the beach calls to us, "You got no fish?"
Wearily I shake my head; Really wish I stayed in bed!
Stranger says, "Why don't you try casting on the other side?"
I've heard those words somewhere before, so we obey and fish once more.
Suddenly our nets are full; too much for our arms to pull!
I look back at that guy again, "Hey it's Jesus, it's our friend!"
I quickly leap into the sea and swim to Jesus, full of glee.
The others seek to land the boat - All these fish, it barely floats!
On the beach we find a camp; coalfire glows to dry the damp.
Jesus says "Give me those fish" - then cooks them for our breakfast dish.
Risen Jesus, here today, be in all we do and say.
Take the work our hands produce, put it to eternal use.

StF 495 – Dear Lord and Father of mankind

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|---|---|
| 1) Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our foolish ways;
Reclothe us in our rightful mind;
In purer lives thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise. | 4) With that deep hush subduing all
Our words and works that drown
The tender whisper of thy call,
As noiseless let thy blessing fall
As fell thy manna down. |
| 2) In simple trust like theirs who heard
Beside the Syrian sea
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word
Rise up and follow thee. | 5) Drop thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of thy peace. |
| 3) O sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with thee
The silence of eternity,
Interpreted by love! | 6) Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still small voice of calm! |

John Greenleaf Whittier

Reading: John 21: 15 - 19

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.'

Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.'

The third time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep. Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.' Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, 'Follow me!'

Reflection

I wonder if you are familiar with, or indeed have ever read, the children's book "What Katy did." Written in 1872, it follows the adventures of a fictional twelve-year-old American girl called Katy Carr. Two sequels follow Katy as she grows up: "What Katy did at school" and "What Katy Did Next." I've never read them, but remember my sister receiving one or more as a birthday present – her name being Katy.

I've given this service the title "What Jesus did next." The death and resurrection of Jesus was not the end of the story, but the start of a new chapter for all. In the book of Acts the gospel writer Luke says this of Jesus: *After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.* (Acts 1:3) Jesus's work on earth was far from complete and yet we are only given a glimpse of what he did in those forty days. One of which was the account we heard from John's gospel. Very conveniently the passage lends itself to a true three-point reflection.

Firstly, we notice that Jesus provides. Peter, John and five other disciples have returned to the sea to fish. It is night and by early morning they haven't caught anything. I can't help but shake my head at them. They have been in this position before and Jesus then gently advised them to cast the net on the other side. Somewhat begrudgingly perhaps, Peter did so and reaped the benefit of a net full of fish. So how does he not remember that now?

Well, Peter and his friends are grieving. They are confused. They have lost direction. They are frightened. They are uncertain of the future. The all-consuming task of just keeping going is the only thing they can manage. And focusing on the routine things of life help to bring some semblance of order and comfort. So a fishing trip became the natural response to the situation – a familiar task that allowed some breathing space. But perhaps they weren't really thinking about what they were doing. Only when Jesus called to them did it trigger a memory and produce a reaction. The nets once again became full of fish. Then their eyes were opened and they realised that Jesus had been there all along. The disciples had temporarily lost their way; they had inadvertently diverted from the path; but Jesus was on hand to steer them back gently. A watchful eye and a guiding hand soon had them back on an even keel. Jesus provided the disciples with what they needed to refocus.

And he hadn't finished providing for them. Jesus was busy preparing breakfast. Already he had a fire lit and was cooking fish for his friends. As they piled out of the boat he asked them to bring him some of the fish they had just caught. Jesus encouraged the disciples to make an offering of what they had received, which he used to supplement what he had already provided.

I wonder if today we are being called to refocus; to try something that Jesus has suggested before which we may have forgotten. Jesus is watching and will guide us if we just first decide to set sail.

The second point we note is the way Jesus gave Peter the opportunity to recommit to him. Having fed Peter, and no doubt allowed him some downtime to rest after the night's events, Jesus engaged Peter in conversation. It was a gentle conversation - not a dressing down. It was a moment of reflection – not a time of forgiveness, for Jesus had already forgiven Peter. It was a chance for Peter to reconnect with his friend and Lord.

Jesus once said to his disciples, *"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me - just as the Father knows me and I know the Father -and I lay down my life for the sheep."* Jesus - the shepherd of God's children; the shepherd who knows each of the flock by name and knows each of their needs; the shepherd willing to give his life for the flock, acknowledged Peter in the way he did when he first called him to leave his nets and follow him. "Simon, son of John" Jesus said. Then he asked him, "Do you love me?"

There is a simple worship song that goes like this:

My God is a good God, yes, He is.

My God is a good God, yes, He is.

He lifts me up, He turns me around.

He sets my feet on solid ground,

My God is a good God, yes, He is.

That is what Jesus was doing - setting Peter on solid ground. He was giving Peter space and encouragement to begin again; to be lifted up from the pit of despair and turn back to the ways of God knowing that his past mistakes were in the past. Peter was broken and damaged by his denial of Jesus, but Jesus built him back up as a person made stronger and more beautiful through love.

Maybe something of the past is troubling you today. Seek out a quiet moment to respond to the question Jesus asks, "Do you love me?" Answer it honestly, then allow Jesus to restore you and set you aright.

The final point to recognise is how Jesus commissions Peter to continue the work of the kingdom. Having brought Peter to a point of reconciliation, Jesus reminds him to extend the same love and compassion to others. Peter is charged with tending the flock. Feed them and look after them is the order. Just what Jesus had done with the disciples there and then. Ever the teacher, Jesus had modelled what he wanted Peter to do. But I'm sure he wasn't expecting Peter to invite everyone to a weekly BBQ on the beach. Peter was to find his own way forward, which wasn't going to be a bed of roses. In fact Jesus made it quite plain what was in store for Peter.

One of my favourite Disney films is called "Enchanted." Princess Giselle is banished from her fairytale kingdom and transported to the real world by her evil stepmother. Bringing with her the romantic ideals of love and marriage she is upset and confused to find people here don't love each other. As you can imagine there are some pretty twee songs in the film, but the best one, in my opinion, is called "That's how you know." Giselle, is trying to explain that it's no good just saying you love someone, you have to show it, and sings the line, "Something everyday will show."

That's basically what Jesus was saying when in his earlier teaching, Jesus had commanded his disciples, "*Love one another as I have loved you.*" Peter had just verbally reaffirmed his love for Jesus. Now he was expected to show it too - to live it out in his daily life. "*By this,*" continued Jesus, "*shall all know that you are my disciples.*"

I was once sitting in my car on a school car park reading my bible before school started. Later in the staff room, another member of staff commented on this and said, "Oh I didn't know you were a Christian." I've thought about that a lot since. I don't think she was inferring that my actions don't match with that of a follower of Jesus. I hope not anyway!! But it made me think that I should be more forthcoming about following Christ within the communities where I work.

Peter did a pretty good job of tending the flock didn't he? They all did. Because here we are today, two thousand years later, still worshipping our God of love; our Saviour, Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. And that power and love will help me to share the good news of the gospel with those I meet in my daily life, if I just take time to seek out the God given opportunities to glorify Him.

Let us pray: Risen Lord, you call us again and again to turn our lives around and follow you. Sometimes we pretend not to hear you, and sometimes we just choose to go our own way anyway. We are sorry. Forgive us, Lord, and grant us again time to change; time to hear you afresh; time to turn around; and time to follow you. Good shepherd, may we hear your call to love and look after the sheep of your flock. Guide us and provide us with all that we need to serve you and bring glory to God our Father. **Amen.**

We continue our prayers as we sing:

StF 513 – Take this moment

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

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Response

Today is Vocations Sunday – the day the Methodist Church asks us to consider our calling.

In exploring today's gospel passage, I read this in one reflection:

"The resurrection of Jesus is not just a historical event, or a source of praise and adoration. It is also the centre of God's calling on each of us. We do not just receive God's resurrection life, we live it. And we don't just live Christ's resurrection life, we also pass it on by embracing others with the love, grace, healing and compassion of Christ." (Sacredise)

I enjoy listening to Classic FM and the other morning someone contacted Dan Walker to say how much the music was helping her with her work – she was contemplating a project bid and tackling the headings "Focus; Strategy and Creativity." That's what Jesus did next after the resurrection – he focussed the disciples' minds; he gave them a strategy for the future; and inspired their creativity.

So within the framework of those three headings please take a moment to consider these questions:

Focus: What is the need in this moment, in this place - be it in church, in our community, nation or the world?

Strategy: What gifts do we have that will supplement the work of the kingdom in that place?

Creativity: How can our gifts and calling be best used to serve God and give Him glory in that place?

Prayers of Intercession

"Over all the earth you reign on high." King of kings and Lord of lords, we bring before you the concerns of this world. We pray for places where famine, drought, war, oppression, injustice and hatred rob your flock of the potential to live life to the full as you desire. We give thanks for all who support them to overcome the challenges they face; those who work for peace and justice; and for those who speak up in their name. May we cast our nets of love and compassion ever wider, that we too may offer hope.

"Down the mountain the river flows and it brings refreshing wherever it goes." Living Lord, we pray for our nation; for your living water to pour blessing on all those who are facing a future of uncertainty. We remember particularly small businesses struggling to keep going as prices rise and larger companies force them out of the market. We pray for the unemployed; the homeless; those who face an unexpected change of circumstances through illness or injury, separation or death.

May we sink our nets ever lower to receive an abundance of love and compassion to share with others.

"In your city streets will you be God's heart?" God of love, we ask for a blessing on this community here in Brierley Hill. We pray for our schools; health care establishments; emergency services; community hubs and local charities; for the local government and council members. May our church be a beacon of light to all who pass by or visit it during the week. We pray for a blessing on our church district and circuit especially as they face changes in personnel and administrative organisation.

As we gather in our nets with care, recognising what you have provided for us, may we respond by offering to you our gifts, that in your hands they will be used to further the work of the kingdom.

"It's me, it's me, it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer." Shepherd of the sheep, you know what is on our hearts today. You know our worries and concerns; our fears and our joys. Help us to listen to your word and trust you when you tell us what to do. Give us courage to change the way we do things to honour your name and bring glory to God our Father.

As we share in the feast that you have prepared for us, may we be willing to invite others to join in too. **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 477 – Teach me to dance

Ch) Teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart,
Teach me to move in the pow'r of Your Spirit.
Teach me to walk in the light of Your presence,
Teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart.
Teach me to love with Your heart of compassion
Teach me to trust in the word of Your promise
Teach me to hope in the day of Your coming
Teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart.

2) Let all my movements express
A heart that loves to say 'Yes',
A will that leaps to obey You.
Let all my energy blaze
To see the joy in Your face
Let my whole being praise You, praise You.

1) You wrote the rhythm of life,
Created heaven and earth;
In You is joy without measure.
So like a child in Your sight,
I dance to see Your delight
For I was made for Your pleasure, pleasure.

Graham Kendrick © 1993 Make Way Music

Blessing

God of victory over death, your Son revealed himself again and again, and convinced his followers of his glorious resurrection. Grant that we may know his risen presence, in love obediently feed his sheep, and care for the lambs of his flock, until we join the hosts of heaven in worshiping you and praising him who is worthy of blessing and honour, glory and power, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. **Amen.**