

4th September 2022 – Morning Service

Andy Haynes

Call to Worship - Romans 12:1 & 2

So then, my brothers and sisters, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to His service and pleasing to Him. This is the true worship that you should offer.

StF 175 – Light of the world

- 1) Light of the world, You stepped down into darkness
Opened my eyes, let me see.
Beauty that made this heart adore You
Hope of a life spent with You.
- 2) King of all days, oh so highly exalted,
Glorious in heaven above,
Humbly You came to the earth You created,
All for love's sake became poor.

*Ch) So here I am to worship,
Here I am to bow down,
Here I am to say that You're my God:
You're altogether lovely,
Altogether worthy,
Altogether wonderful to me.*

B) And I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross.
And I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross.

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Prayer of Adoration & Confession

Dear Lord God, Help us as we bow before You this morning in worship and in prayer to remember who it is we fall before in adoration and amazement. For You are creator God, the alpha and the omega, both the beginning and the end, the almighty all powerful being who holds all things in His hand. Before time began You existed, when the earth was formless and empty, You were there, Your spirit hovering over the waters. And so it is in awesome wonder that we do consider the works of Thy hand this morning, the very marvel of life itself, the miracle of it all. You have provided for our every need and yet we so often take it all for granted. And so, as we try and express our thanks this morning, we ask that You assist us to proclaim Your greatness, for You are robed in majesty and Your throne is established for all eternity.

And yet Lord, we are Your people, the sheep of Your pasture, and You are our God, and so we come this morning to worship and praise You. We are privileged to be called into service in Your name, to have Your presence dwell among us as we gather together in prayer and praise, but as we do so Lord, we realise how unworthy we are, for we have sinned against You and our fellow citizens in the things we have done, and left undone, that displease You and hurt others. And so we bow before You in humility and despair, asking for Your forgiveness, not only for the wrongs we are aware of, but for those accidental sins that we don't even realise we've committed. Have mercy on us now Lord, in the silence of this moment.... [*Silence*]

And now we repent and ask for forgiveness and mercy in Jesu's name. Your greatest provision, Your Son, in whom we find salvation; for He came to carry the burden of our sin as He faced the horrors of the cross that we may go free and have life everlasting through our belief in Jesus Christ, who taught us all as we pray to say together:-

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 518 – Father hear the prayer we offer

- 1) Father, hear the prayer we offer:
Not for ease that prayer shall be,
But for strength that we may ever
Live our lives courageously.
- 2) Not for ever in green pastures
Do we ask our way to be;
But the steep and rugged pathway
May we tread rejoicingly.
- 3) Not for ever by still waters
Would we idly rest and stay;
But would strike the living fountains
From the rocks along our way.
- 4) Be our strength in hours of weakness,
In our wanderings be our guide;
Through endeavour, failure, danger,
Father, be there at our side.

Love Maria Willis CCL No. 515642

Reading: Luke 14:25 - 33

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'"

"Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples."

StF 566 – Take my life and let it be

- 1) Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.
- 2) Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of thy love;
Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beautiful for thee.
- 3) Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King;
Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from thee.
- 4) Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect, and use
Every power as thou shalt choose.
- 5) Take my will, and make it thine;
It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart - it is thine own;
It shall be thy royal throne.
- 6) Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At thy feet its treasure-store;
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for thee.

Frances Ridley Havergal CCL No. 515642

Sermon

In our reading this morning, we find Jesus teaching the crowds. He is talking about discipleship. The section was headed, 'The cost of discipleship.' Our job now, is to try and wriggle out of what was said! The first thing you need is a good Bible Commentary. One that lets you off the hook! There are other examples of things Jesus said being explained away until they are no threat to us. Examples such as 'turn the other cheek' and we wouldn't want to do anything as silly as that would we?

Matthew 5 v 39 "If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, let him slap your left cheek too." There's some fantastic and complicated explanations for these words of Jesus, which dissolve the meaning away nicely so that we can take no notice of it and get our punches in instead. Whereas what it actually means is "If someone slaps you on the right cheek, let him slap your left cheek too." And it works, and it works wonderfully, you should try it sometime and find out for yourselves. It's a bit like the proof of the pudding being in the eating. But we, being full of self-importance and arrogant pride, prefer the bitter revenge approach.

Jesus spoke to different groups of people, and the message was sometimes different. This is not the Bible contradicting itself, but having specific things to say to specific groups of people concerning issues affecting their relationship with God. A shy person needs more confidence. A confident person needs less arrogance. An arrogant person needs shooting! 😊 But you get the idea – we are all different, yet the Bible speaks to all of us.

So to the Pharisees Jesus speaks about humility and charitable acts of kindness. This dealt with the issues concerning their attitudes. This was what they needed to hear. This was the lesson for them. But today, it's the crowd that Jesus addresses. The multitudes that were following Him. Why were they following? Who were they? Where were they from? What were they after? Where many gather, more still will gather. Crowds attract crowds. This crowd would be God's chosen people, the Israelites, for Jesus Himself said to the Phoenician woman in Matthew 15 v 24 "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." So here they are, following Jesus. But were they following Him, or just drifting along behind? Some would be genuine, some would be devious, some would be nonchalant. As Christ comes and dwells amongst us today, He will find a similar mixed bag of followers in you and me, just the same. Some will know and recognise His presence with them, others will not know Him nor feel Him draw near.

The words the crowd wanted to hear were "follow me for wealth, abundance and great honour." But instead Christ tells them to forsake all else for the kingdom, despising what was dear to them, giving up on their creature comforts. The King James Version and NIV & others record Jesus as saying "If anyone comes to me and does not hate Father and Mother etc. he cannot be my disciple." I wish it did not, I wish it were toned down. But it's serious stuff. And Jesus highlights the fact that it is hard teaching, for he ends with the words "He who has ears to hear let him hear."

Many times we see Jesus turning things upside down with His words and actions. Talking and eating with sinners. Suffering little children to come unto him. Healing on the Sabbath Turning the tables over in the temple. He turns things upside down here as well. Isn't it one of the commandments "Honour thy Father and thy Mother?" And here is Jesus telling them to hate them! Jesus didn't have a ministry of hatred, but of compassion and love. But we deny ourselves the love of Christ when we don't love Him, who first loved us. So apart from wanting to get their attention, what was Jesus doing with the crowd? The Bible says "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." (John 1 v 11) These were God's chosen people, the Israelites – Jews.

The old testament gives many examples of how they struggled to live according to God's will. They failed to please Him. God says to Samuel in 1 Samuel 8 v 7 "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all they say, for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me." And again in 1 Samuel 10 v 19 "And ye have this day rejected your God, who Himself saved you from all your adversities and tribulations...."

This was the time when the people favoured a King over them in place of God. Were things to change? No. Look at how Jesus would Himself be treated. Isaiah 53 v3 says “He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and we hid as it were our faces from Him, He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.” These people and their ancestors had shown contempt and hatred for God. You don’t believe me? They beat and whipped His Son, then nailed Him to a cross of wood. Were they following traditions passed on from generation to generation? Rejecting God time and time again. Was Jesus trying to get them to break with this mindset and think for themselves, taking a fresh look at what God was offering them?

Jesus turns things round and virtually says ‘How about all those things that are dear to you - would you dare to hate them as you’ve hated God? Do it now, and find some love for me!’

Look at the Saints and martyrs down the years that have given their lives that the faith should live on. Even today there are people in prison and whose lives are threatened by others just because of their faith in Jesus. How fortunate we are in this country of ours that we are not called upon to suffer such atrocities for Christ’s sake. And yet how weak and feeble most of us are for the cause. Jesus is saying we are not disciples if we are not sincere. If we are ashamed to mention His name in front of relatives and friends for fear of losing that friendship, then we have not loved Jesus more than them.

Jesus is also indicating that life will not be easy if we follow Him. We must be prepared to deny ourselves the things of the flesh as we seek the Spiritual things of heaven instead. Remember the rich young ruler who came to Jesus asking what he must do to inherit eternal life? (Luke 18 v 18) After telling Jesus he kept all the commandments, Jesus told him to sell all he had and follow Him. We are told he went away sad. His possessions meant more to him than Jesus. And today we do live in a world where things are very much upside down. And I believe Jesus didn’t turn things upside down with His teaching, but tried to turn them the right way up! Because when we hold nothing dear except Christ himself, then we will have life, and have it more abundantly. (John 10 v 10 – *I come that you may have life, and have it more abundantly*)

Life in church gets a bit fraught at times. Is it because we love the position we hold in the church more than Christ? Is it because the trivia is more important? Is it that we love Methodism more than Jesus? Perhaps we need to turn everything on its head – and just get on and build the kingdom in His name. So whatever it is that holds us back, we need to make a fresh commitment to Christ. Are we just part of the crowd this day? Or are we willing to stand up for Jesus, nail our colours to the mast, following him and seeking to do His will, holding nothing back!

StF 550 – Forth in thy name O Lord I go

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| 1) Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go,
My daily labour to pursue,
Thee, only thee, resolved to know
In all I think, or speak, or do. | 4) Give me to bear thy easy yoke,
And every moment watch and pray,
And still to things eternal look,
And hasten to thy glorious day; |
| 2) The task thy wisdom has assigned
O let me cheerfully fulfil,
In all my works thy presence find,
And prove thy good and perfect will. | 5) For thee delightfully employ
Whate'er thy bounteous grace has given,
And run my course with even joy,
And closely walk with thee to heaven. |
| 3) Thee may I set at my right hand,
Whose eyes my inmost substance see,
And labour on at thy command,
And offer all my works to thee. | |

Charles Wesley CCL No. 515642

Prayers of Intercession

And now Lord, we bring our troubled world before you this morning. We are concerned about the devastating effects of war in Ukraine, innocent victims whose lives are disrupted, whose homes are destroyed, whose loved ones are lost, whose future lies in ruin and whose dreams are shattered. We also think of the many refugees at this time, who have nowhere to go, who are vulnerable, lonely and fearful. Dear Lord, bless those who work hard to bring them some relief, continue to inspire compassion and generosity in the hearts of the nations of the world.

L: Lord in Your mercy **R: Hear our prayer**

We now pray for the persecuted Christians around the world. They face unbelievable treatment just because of their beliefs and faith in You, and are a great example of courage and strength to us all. And so we ask the You be near to them Lord, and help them in their suffering. May they know the power of Your Holy Spirit, reassure them of the hope they have in the gospel message of Salvation, keep them walking with Christ Jesus and ever faithful, encompass them with Your unfailing love and bring them peace we pray.

L: Lord in Your mercy **R: Hear our prayer**

Everlasting and generous God, we thank you for all that you provide for us in this our nation, we thank You for the freedom we have and ask that You help us to appreciate it and use it wisely. Help those who struggle with rising energy costs and the inflation it brings that affects us all. We pray now with these things in mind, that you will give wisdom and guidance to our new Prime Minister. May they govern us with justice and peace, praying that all in authority will act with integrity and loyalty to those they serve both on a national and local level.

L: Lord in Your mercy **R: Hear our prayer**

We pray for the churches of our land, may they seek to play an active role in their communities, responding to the needs within them. We pray for our own circuit and all who work within it to keep our churches functioning. We pray for our own individual churches, bless the work that goes on and all who contribute. We give thanks for the monetary gifts received each week to cover running costs which are ever increasing, we ask that you bless both the gift and the giver so that the kingdom work may increase through both. Loving God, we pray that we will be made strong in your service and faithful in following our Saviour. Inspire us through your word, that Your church on earth would declare with clarity and power the good news of Your love for everyone. May we all be a light for the gospel, standing firm in the message of hope we have found in Christ Jesus.

L: Lord in Your mercy **R: Hear our prayer**

All knowing and all loving God, we bring before You now, all those whom we love and know that are in need this day, may they feel your presence with them in their hour of need, comfort them and encourage them. May they know your love and care, place Your arms around them sending appropriate help and assistance where necessary, and we ask all this in and through the precious name of Jesus.

L: Lord in Your mercy **R: Hear our prayer. Amen**

StF 563 – O Jesus I have promised

- 1) O Jesus, I have promised
To serve you to the end;
Lord, be for ever near me,
My master and my friend;
I shall not fear the battle
If you are by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway
If you will be my guide.
- 2) O let me feel you near me;
The world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle,
The tempting sounds I hear;
My foes are ever near me,
Around me and within;
But, Jesus, now draw nearer,
And shield my soul from sin.
- 3) O let me hear you speaking
In accents clear and still,
Above the storms of passion,
The murmurs of self-will;
O speak to reassure me,
To hasten or control.
Lord, speak, and make me listen,
O guardian of my soul.
- 4) O Jesus, you have promised
To all who follow you,
That where you are in glory
Your servant shall be too;
And, Jesus, I have promised
To serve you to the end;
O give me grace to follow
My master and my friend!

John Ernest Bode CCL No. 515642

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.