8th November 2026 – Morning Service

Liam Hodgetts

Prayer for Remembrance Sunday

God of all, whose commitment to the world knows no end, we turn to you our refuge and hope.

We acknowledge that you are the source of all justice and peace.

Graciously draw near to us at this time to stir our thinking, deepen our reflections and shape our living.

We remember before you all who have given their lives in the service of others in war. In gratitude we honour those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

May their example of self-giving love be an inspiration to us all. We hold in your presence those who continue to suffer because of war.

Comfort and sustain all who bear the scars and tears of conflict. May we find the wisdom and grace to support one another in times of need.

We commend to your care His Majesty's Armed Forces. Uphold and guide the men and women of the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force as they strive to be a force for good in our world.

May they be professional and effective in carrying out the tasks required of them. We seek your peace for all people.

Bless and strengthen those from every area of society who are endeavouring to bring an end to injustice, hostilities and conflict.

In our peace-making, together may we find courage, resilience and hope.

These prayers are offered in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

The Revd David Barrett, former Deputy Chaplain General for the British Army

StF 706 – Longing for light, we wait in darkness

1) Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.

Ch) Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your Church gathered today.

2) Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice.

3) Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.

4) Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.

5) Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.

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Prayers of Adoration and Thanksgiving

Almighty and everlasting God, we come before you in wonder and gratitude. You are the light that shines in the darkness. You are the hope that sustains us through difficult times and the constant presence that guides us on our journey. You are faithful when we are uncertain, patient when we become distracted, and loving even when we lose our way. Your light never fades and your promises never fail.

Gracious God, we thank you for the light you bring into our lives. We are so thankful for the hope that sustains us and for the faith that helps us face each new day. We thank you that we do not have to walk through life alone, but can depend on your constant presence and find strength in the fellowship of others.

As we gather on Remembrance Sunday, we pause to remember those who have given their lives in the service of others; to those who have made sacrifices for the freedom and safety we enjoy, and those who continue to work for peace in a troubled world. We remember that the freedoms we often take for granted have come at a great cost. We give thanks that your light continues to shine through acts of courage, compassion, and selflessness. We are blessed that your peace is greater than anything this world can offer. Receive our worship, Lord, and help us to honour you in all that we say and do. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

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 76 – Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising

1) Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising,
give me joy in my heart, I pray;
give me joy in my heart, keep me praising,
keep me praising till the break of day:

Ch) Sing hosanna! Sing hosanna!
Sing hosanna to the King of kings!
Sing hosanna! Sing hosanna!
Sing hosanna to the King!

2) Give me peace in my heart, keep me loving,
give me peace in my heart, I pray;
give me peace in my heart, keep me loving,
keep me loving till the break of day:

3) Give me love in my heart, keep me serving,
give me love in my heart, I pray;
give me love in my heart, keep me serving,
keep me serving till the break of day:

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StF 173 – Into the darkness of this world

1) Into the darkness of this world,
into the shadows of the night;
into this loveless place you came,
lightened our burdens, eased our pain,
and made these hearts your home.
Into the darkness once again –
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

Ch) Come with your love
to make us whole,
come with your light to lead us on,
driving the darkness far from our souls:
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

2) Into the longing of our souls,
into these heavy hearts of stone,
shine on us now your piercing light,
order our lives and souls aright,
by grace and love unknown,
until in you our hearts unite –
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

3) O Holy Child, Emmanuel,
hope of the ages, God with us,
visit again this broken place,
till all the earth declares your praise,
and your great mercies own.
Now let your love be born in us,
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

Ch) Come in your glory,
take your place,
Jesus, the Name above all names,
we long to see you face to face,
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

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Reading: Matthew 25:1-13 (GNT)

“At that time the Kingdom of heaven will be like this. Once there were ten young women who took their oil lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and the other five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any extra oil with them, while the wise ones took containers full of oil for their lamps. The bridegroom was late in coming, so they began to nod and fall asleep.

“It was already midnight when the cry rang out, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come and meet him!’ The ten young women woke up and trimmed their lamps. Then the foolish ones said to the wise ones, ‘Let us have some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.’ ‘No, indeed,’ the wise ones answered, ‘there is not enough for you and for us. Go to the store and buy some for yourselves.’ So the foolish ones went off to buy some oil; and while they were gone, the bridegroom arrived. The five who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast, and the door was closed.

“Later the others arrived. ‘Sir, sir! Let us in!’ they cried out. ‘Certainly not! I don't know you,’ the bridegroom answered.”

And Jesus concluded, “Watch out, then, because you do not know the day or the hour.

Sermon

Have you ever found yourself in a situation that you simply weren’t prepared for? Perhaps you’ve been unexpectedly thrown into a meeting to cover for someone who is absent. Maybe you’ve had unexpected visitors pop round before you’ve had a chance to tidy the house. Or perhaps your usual bus has been taken out of service, and what should have been a straightforward journey home turns into catching four different buses just to get where you need to be!

If you’re anything like me, you probably like to have a plan. You like to know what’s happening, where you need to be, and what you need to do. You like to be prepared for whatever life might throw at you. You might even have lists of lists of jobs to complete, just to make sure nothing gets forgotten!

Being prepared can make life feel a little more manageable. It gives us a sense of security and helps us feel ready for whatever comes next. But what about when it comes to our faith? Our reading from Matthew 25 – the parable of the ten bridesmaids – challenges us to think about exactly that.

Jesus tells the story of ten young women who are waiting for the bridegroom to arrive so that the wedding celebrations can begin. Five of the women are described as wise, and five as foolish. All ten have lamps, and all ten are expecting the bridegroom. They are all in the same place, waiting for the same event. But the wise women bring extra oil for their lamps, while the foolish women do not.

The bridegroom is delayed, and eventually all ten women become tired and fall asleep. Then, at midnight, a shout goes up announcing that the bridegroom is coming. The women wake up and prepare their lamps. The foolish women suddenly realise that they do not have enough oil, and they ask the wise women to share theirs. But there isn't enough to go around, so the foolish women are sent off to buy more.

While they are away, the bridegroom arrives. Those who are ready go in with him to the wedding feast, and the door is shut. When the other women eventually return, they find themselves standing outside, knocking on the door, but they are not allowed in.

It is quite a striking story, isn't it? Ten women waiting for the same person, in the same place, with the same expectation. Yet only five are ready when the moment comes.

Jesus has just been warning his disciples that nobody knows the day or the hour when he will return. His friends are still trying to understand what this means when he tells them this parable.

He is reminding them that they cannot know exactly when he will come again, so they need to be ready.

His message is not about knowing the future or being able to predict when something will happen. It is about how we live while we wait.

Now, you might be thinking, as I did when I first read this story, why couldn't the wise bridesmaids share their oil? Surely that would have been the kind and generous thing to do? After all, John the Baptist teaches us in Luke 3:11 that anyone who has two coats should share with someone who has none. We are encouraged throughout Scripture to care for one another, to share what we have and to look after those who are struggling.

So why is this story different?

I don't think Jesus is suggesting that we should stop being generous or that we should refuse to help others. Instead, the oil represents something that cannot simply be handed from one person to another. The wise bridesmaids cannot give away what they need in order to be ready themselves.

The foolish bridesmaids weren't necessarily poor, and there is nothing to suggest that they were unable to buy more oil. They simply hadn't planned ahead. They had assumed that what they had would be enough. They had lamps, but they hadn't brought the extra oil they needed to keep them burning. So, when the moment arrived, they weren't ready.

This begins to speak to us about our own relationship with God. The lamps and oil can be understood as a picture of our faith and our relationship with God. If we look back to the book of Exodus, we find that at the centre of the Tabernacle stood a lampstand, known as a Menorah. The priests were responsible for keeping its seven lamps burning, making sure there was a continual supply of olive oil. The light was not something that could be lit once and forgotten about. It needed attention and care. It needed to be tended.

The lampstand was a reminder of God's presence among his people, a light that continued to shine. And that's an important image for us.

Our faith is not something that we can simply switch on when we need it and then forget about for the rest of the time. Our relationship with God needs attention. It needs nurturing. It needs us to make time for prayer, to spend time with Scripture, to worship, to listen, and to allow God to shape our lives.

God is always present, but we need to make space to recognise that presence. We cannot expect our faith to sustain us through every difficult moment if we have spent no time nurturing it. We cannot expect our lamps to keep burning brightly if we never think about whether there is any oil left.

Of course, there will be times when life gets busy. There will be times when prayer feels difficult, when reading the Bible becomes another job on an already long list, or when attending church feels like something we do out of habit rather than because we are truly engaging with God. There may be times when we find ourselves relying on the faith of others rather than developing our own.

Do you ever feel as though you're using someone else's oil to keep your own lamp burning?

Perhaps you find yourself saying "Amen" at the end of somebody else's prayers, knowing that the words they have spoken aren't really words you have made your own. Perhaps church has become something you do for an hour on a Sunday, but the rest of the week looks no different. Perhaps you know all the familiar hymns, prayers, and readings, but sometimes wonder whether your own relationship with God is as strong as it once was.

Nothing may have gone particularly wrong. Your lamp is still lit. You are still coming to church, still taking part, still doing all the familiar things. But somewhere along the way, you have stopped

checking your flask. And perhaps, if you are honest with yourself, you know that it is getting a little empty. If that sounds familiar, then this parable is worth taking seriously.

Jesus isn't telling this story to frighten us into believing that God is waiting to catch us out. He is reminding us that our faith matters, and that we cannot leave it entirely to somebody else to keep it alive.

Community is incredibly important to our Christian faith. We need one another. We need the encouragement, support and prayers of those around us. There are times when our own faith feels weak, and it is the faith of someone else that helps us keep going. There are times when we struggle to pray, and knowing that others are praying for us makes all the difference.

That is one of the wonderful things about being part of a church community. We are not expected to walk our journey of faith alone. But while we can support one another, we cannot have faith on someone else's behalf.

We can pray for someone who is struggling, but we cannot pray their prayers for them forever. We can encourage someone to come to church, but we cannot develop their relationship with God for them. We can share our experiences, offer guidance, and be an example of what it means to live a Christian life, but ultimately each of us has to make our own response to God.

Everyone must check their own oil.

And that could be the challenge Jesus is leaving with us today. We need to think about whether we are simply carrying a lamp, or whether we are making sure that there is enough oil to keep it burning.

It is easy to become comfortable with the routines of faith. We can become so familiar with church, with our prayers, and with the words of Scripture that we forget to stop and consider what they mean to us personally. We can assume that because we have always believed, we will always have the same strength of faith. But faith is a relationship, and relationships need time, care, and attention.

The good news is that it is never too late to start tending our lamps. We can make time for God again. We can return to prayer, open our Bibles, seek out opportunities to worship, and find ways to put our faith into practice in our everyday lives. We can ask God to renew our hearts and help us grow closer to him.

Being prepared doesn't mean that we have everything worked out. It means that we are making space for God in our lives, trusting him and allowing our faith to grow. The five wise bridesmaids were not wise because they knew exactly when the bridegroom would arrive. They were wise because they were prepared, even though they didn't know how long they would have to wait.

And that is what Jesus asks of us.

We don't know what tomorrow will bring. We don't know what challenges we might face, what opportunities might come our way or when God might call us to something new. But we can choose how we live today. We can choose to nurture our faith, to love our neighbours, to serve others and to keep our relationship with God alive.

We are called to be people who carry the light of Christ into the world. A world that can sometimes feel very dark, a world where people are struggling, where hope can be hard to find, and where kindness and compassion are needed more than ever. But to be that light, we need to make sure our own lamps are burning.

So, as we reflect on this parable, perhaps we should each ask ourselves a simple question: Am I prepared?

Not prepared in the sense of having every detail of life organised, or having a list of lists to make sure nothing is forgotten. But prepared in the sense of being ready to meet God, of having a faith that is alive and growing, and of being willing to respond when he calls.

Let us not rely solely on the faith of others. Let us not assume that yesterday's oil will be enough for tomorrow. Instead, let us take responsibility for our own relationship with God, while continuing to encourage and support one another along the way.

Let us keep our lamps burning, tend our oil, and be the light shining in the darkness.

And, whenever the bridegroom comes, may he find us ready.

StF 170 – Darkness like a shroud covers the earth

1) Darkness like a shroud covers the earth.
Evil like a cloud covers the people.
But the Lord will rise upon you
and his glory will appear on you,
nations will come to your light.

Ch) Arise, shine, your light has come,
the glory of the Lord has risen on you!
Arise, shine, your light has come,
Jesus the Light of the world has come.

2) Children of the light, be clean and pure.
Rise, you sleepers, Christ will shine on you.
Take the Spirit's flashing two-edged sword
and with faith declare God's mighty word;
stand up and in his strength be strong.

3) Here among us now, Christ the Light
kindles brighter flames in our trembling hearts.
Living Word, our Lamp, come guide our feet
as we walk as one in light and peace
till justice and truth shine like the sun.

4) Like a city bright so let us blaze;
lights in every street turning night to day.
And the darkness shall not overcome
till the fullness of Christ's kingdom comes,
dawning to God's eternal day.

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A prayer to find joy in sorrow

Eternal God,
In the sorrow of our divided world, may we find joy in the love of Christ.
In the sorrow of inequality, may we find joy in the kindness of Christ.
In the sorrow of grief, may we find joy in the peace of Christ.
In the sorrow of our hearts, may we find joy in the gentleness of Christ.
Now and always. **Amen.**

Andrew Charlesworth, Chair, Methodist Cymru

Prayer of Confession

Loving God, we come before you recognising that sometimes we have not been as prepared as we should be. We have allowed the busyness of life to distract us from spending time with you. We have neglected our prayers and relied too heavily on the faith of others to keep our own lamps burning. We have sometimes been content to let others do the praying, the serving, the sharing, without taking responsibility for our own relationship with you. Forgive us, Lord, when our lamps have been burning low and our flasks have been left empty.

Forgive us when we have assumed that yesterday's faith will be enough for tomorrow, and when we have failed to recognise the importance of keeping our hearts open to your presence. Help us to replenish our faith and to make room for you in our everyday lives. Thank you that you are a God of patience, love, and new beginnings. Renew us by your loving Spirit, so that we may be ready to answer your call and shine your light in the world around us. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

StF 407 – Hear the call of the kingdom

1) Hear the call of the kingdom,
lift your eyes to the King;
let his song rise within you
as a fragrant offering
of how God, rich in mercy,
came in Christ to redeem
all who trust in his unfailing grace.

Ch) King of heaven, we will answer the call.
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,
filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim
salvation in Jesus' name.

2) Hear the call of the kingdom
to be children of light
with the mercy of heaven,
the humility of Christ;
walking justly before him,
loving all that is right,
that the life of Christ may shine through us.

3) Hear the call of the kingdom
to reach out to the lost
with the Father's compassion
in the wonder of the cross,
bringing peace and forgiveness,
and a hope yet to come:
let the nations put their trust in him.

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Prayers of Intercession

Loving God, we bring before you the needs of our world, especially those places torn apart by war, conflict, and violence. On this Remembrance Sunday, we remember all those who have lost their lives in conflict, those who have been injured, displaced or bereaved, and those who continue to live with the consequences of war. We pray for all who work for peace and reconciliation, and for world leaders, that they may choose wisdom, justice, and compassion over hatred and division. Your light shines in the darkness, **and the darkness has not overcome it.**

We pray for our nation and all those who lead and serve it. Give wisdom to our political leaders and those making decisions that affect people's lives. We remember those struggling with poverty, homelessness, loneliness, and uncertainty. We give thanks for those working in our hospitals and hospices, our emergency services, the education system, and other vital roles. Strengthen those who are weary and help us to build a society where everyone is valued and nobody is forgotten. Your light shines in the darkness, **and the darkness has not overcome it.**

We pray for our local communities; our towns and villages, our neighbours, and all those we meet in everyday life. We remember those who are unwell, grieving, lonely, or facing difficulties that others may not see. Help us to notice those in need and to be generous with our time, kindness, and love. May we bring hope and light wherever we go. Your light shines in the darkness, **and the darkness has not overcome it.**

We pray for our churches and for the Vale of Stour Circuit. We remember its ministers, staff, lay workers, and volunteers, giving thanks for all they do in serving our churches and communities. Bless them with strength, encouragement and fresh inspiration. Help our churches to be places of welcome and belonging, where people encounter your love. May we not simply keep our own lamps burning, but carry your light beyond our church buildings and into the world. Your light shines in the darkness, **and the darkness has not overcome it.**

Finally, Lord, we pray for ourselves. You know our joys, worries, and the things we carry silently in our hearts. We pray for those whose faith is wavering, whose lamps are burning low, or who are struggling to find hope. Renew our strength, deepen our faith and help us to make time for you in our everyday lives. May we be ready to answer your call and live out our faith through kindness, compassion, and service to others. Your light shines in the darkness, **and the darkness has not overcome it.**

As we remember those who have gone before us, help us to honour their memory by the way we live today. Make us people of peace, people of hope and people who shine your light in the darkness. We offer all these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, our light and our hope. **Amen.**

StF 59 – Shine, Jesus, shine

1) Lord, the light of your love is shining,
in the midst of the darkness, shining;
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us;
set us free by the truth you now bring us –
shine on me, shine on me.

Ch) Shine, Jesus, shine,
fill this land with the Father's glory;
blaze, Spirit, blaze,
set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow,
flood the nations with grace and mercy;
send forth your word,
Lord, and let there be light!

2) Lord, I come to your awesome presence,
from the shadows into your radiance;
by your blood I may enter your brightness:
search me, try me, consume all my darkness –
shine on me, shine on me.

3) As we gaze on your kingly brightness
so our faces display your likeness,
ever changing from glory to glory:
mirrored here, may our lives tell your story –
shine on me, shine on me.

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The Grace

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