

22nd May 2022 – Morning Service

Aldersgate Sunday

Rev Christine Watson

Call to Worship

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout to the Rock of our salvation.
Come before him with thanksgiving; sing him joyful songs of praise!

Song – Bless the Lord O my soul (10,000 reasons)

- Ch) Bless the Lord, O my soul, o my soul,
Worship His holy name.
Sing like never before, O my soul,
I'll worship your holy name.*
- 1) The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning,
It's time to sing your song again.
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before
me,
Let me be singing when the evening comes.
- 2) You're rich in love and you're slow to anger,
Your name is great and your heart is kind.
For all your goodness, I will keep on singing,
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find.
- 3) And on that day when my strength is failing,
The end draws near and my time has come,
Still my soul will sing your praise unending,
Ten thousand years and then forever more!

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Prayer

Almighty God, we come to you in awe and joy to sing your praises, to pray to you in faith and to acknowledge your holiness, might and glory. You are the Word who brought life into being throughout the universe and yet you have blessed us with your love through the ages, sinful though we are. Generous God, we offer our heartfelt thanks to you for all you have done for us and given us throughout our lives: for people who have guided, inspired and loved us; for all that has enriched our lives and brought us happiness. Gracious God you shared our mortal frame as Jesus Christ, not only so we could understand how you want us to live, but Jesus died at Calvary to redeem us from our sins. His resurrection offers everybody the gift of eternal life, not through any merit of our own, nor through our works, but as your gift of grace. Amazing God, your goodness overwhelms us as we reflect upon it, for our own shortcomings rise before us, reminding us how far short we have fallen from what you would have us be. Merciful God, although Jesus showed us how we should live, we confess that our love for and service to you and our neighbours are frequently not wholehearted. As we turn away from what we know is wrong, we ask your forgiveness for the sins we have committed and for the good we have neglected to do.

Loving Lord, we believe you have heard and answered our prayer, pardoning us and calling us to follow you again. May the Holy Spirit help us to serve both you and our neighbours faithfully and warm-heartedly from now onwards, in the beautiful name of the risen Lord Jesus. Amen

Reading: Psalm 30

I will exalt you, LORD, for you lifted me out of the depths and did not let my enemies gloat over me.

LORD my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me.

You, LORD, brought me up from the realm of the dead; you spared me from going down to the pit.

Sing the praises of the LORD, you his faithful people; praise his holy name.

For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favour lasts a lifetime;

weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.

When I felt secure, I said, "I will never be shaken."

LORD, when you favoured me, you made my royal mountain stand firm;

but when you hid your face, I was dismayed.

To you, LORD, I called; to the Lord I cried for mercy:
 "What is gained if I am silenced, if I go down to the pit?
 Will the dust praise you? Will it proclaim your faithfulness?
 Hear, LORD, and be merciful to me; LORD, be my help."
 You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,
 that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent.
 LORD my God, I will praise you forever.

StF 82 – O Lord My God

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|---|---|
| <p>1) O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder
 Consider all the works thy hand hath made,
 I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
 Thy power throughout the universe displayed!</p> | <p>3) And when I think that God His Son not sparing,
 Sent Him to die -- I scarce can take it in.
 That on the cross my burden gladly bearing,
 He bled and died to take away my sin:</p> |
| <p>Ch) <i>Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
 How great Thou art! How great Thou art!
 Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
 How great Thou art! How great Thou art!</i></p> | <p>4) When Christ shall come with shout of
 acclamation
 And take me home - what joy shall fill my heart!
 Then shall I bow in humble adoration
 And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou
 art!</p> |
| <p>2) When through the woods and forest glades I
 wander
 And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
 When I look down from lofty mountain
 grandeur,
 And hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze;</p> | |

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Reading: Luke 24: 13 – 35

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles[a] from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

"What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Sermon

Our reading from Luke's Gospel is placed in a chapter which is all about proving that Jesus was alive and had appeared to the disciples.

Two of the disciples were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus, said to be about 20 miles away, perhaps they were walking home to pick up their lives. There are questions as to exactly where this village was, various sites have been identified as being the Emmaus of the Bible.

As Cleopas and his companion were walking, they were deep in conversation, they were joined by a third person, someone who apparently was unfamiliar with recent events, the conversation continued with this stranger explaining the scriptures and telling them what was predicted about the Messiah, he explained how events in the past showed what would happen and how they could understand the events of the last few days.

It would have been a fascinating conversation to have eavesdropped on, don't you think?

What would Jesus have said?

Where would he have started?

Perhaps Jesus started with Creation, with Abraham, Moses and the prophets. Perhaps he said that in the beginning the Word was with God, and all things were created for and through him.

Perhaps he talked about Abraham, who very nearly sacrificed his son Isaac, only to be stopped by an angel pointing out a ram nearby, Abraham said God would provide his own sacrifice.

Perhaps he talked about Moses who placed a bronze serpent on a pole, any who looked on it and believed were saved from the poison of the serpents, see Numbers 21, perhaps he mentioned the words of the prophets, a virgin shall conceive, a king from the house of David whose reign shall have no end, or perhaps he quoted verses about the suffering servant in Isaiah.

All these pointed to the Messiah, to Jesus.

The conversation lasted all the way to Emmaus, at their invitation, Jesus went in with them. The realisation of who their guest was, only came when he took an ordinary piece of bread and broke it and gave it to them.

It was this familiar action that enabled them to realise just who had been talking with them.

What was their reaction? They said 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us' Luke 24(32).

The two companions on realising who they had been speaking with immediately went back to the others to witness to what they had experienced, they didn't wait till morning, didn't wait till they had had time to reflect, time to learn the right doctrine, or words but they set off right away, they were too excited to wait. Today is the nearest Sunday to the 24th May which I am sure as good Methodists you all know is called 'Wesley Day' or 'Aldersgate Sunday'.

On 24 May 1738 John Wesley was attending a meeting of Moravian Christians in Aldersgate, London. Someone read from Luther's Preface to the Epistle to Romans. Wesley says that 'while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed'. John Wesley had a similar experience to that of Cleopas and his companion. He didn't have Jesus physically there explaining the scriptures to him but through the scriptures he came to have an experience of God

that was not just head knowledge but heart knowledge. He experienced God's love in a most personal and life-giving way. Until then he had known God in his mind, but not in his heart. Now he understood the value of a personal experience of God that would bring assurance of salvation to the believer.

This experience changed his life, it was a pivotal moment, he had already been ordained for 10 years as an Anglican Priest but this transformed his belief and preaching. As a result of this John Wesley became able to tell others about Jesus and his relationship with him. On talking to his brother, Charles, he realised that he too had had a similar experience a few days before. It was never the intention of the brothers to form a new denomination but to witness to a living relationship with God through Jesus. To reform, revive the Anglican Church from within.

Like the disciples the Wesleys felt called to preach repentance, like the disciples they felt empowered by the Holy Spirit to make a real difference, a real impact on peoples' beliefs and lives.

We, like the disciples, like the Wesleys, are called to be witnesses to the most exciting story ever told, we are witnesses to the most exciting love story ever told. A love story where the main characters are God and each of us, and every single person you see.

This is exciting, this is as the gospels tell us Good News which we need to pass on. We don't need to be clever, be able to preach, be able to tell a long story. We don't need to know all the right doctrines, we don't need to know all the right answers, we just need to know in our hearts that God loves us and we need to tell others that God loves them and wants to know them better.

Amen

StF 345 – And can it be

- 1) And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died he for me, who caused his pain?
For me, who him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
Amazing love! How can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
- 2) 'Tis mystery all: the Immortal dies!
Who can explore his strange design?
In vain the first-born seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
Let angel minds enquire no more.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
Let angel minds enquire no more.
- 3) He left his Father's throne above
So free, so infinite his grace
Emptied himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me!
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me!
- 4) Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray -
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light,
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.
- 5) No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in him, is mine!
Alive in him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ, my own.
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ, my own.

Charles Wesley CCL No. 515642

Prayers of Concern

Lord, you constantly surprise us, answering our prayers in ways we had not thought or asked, changing peoples' lives beyond all our expectations. We gasp at the joy we find in you, in the face of evil and suffering. We marvel at your miraculous love bringing hope out of despair bringing health out of sickness bringing life out of death.

We need your miracles Lord, in a world stale with bad news. We need the miracles of hidden power; of your love working secretly, slowly, unseen, in the hearts of humankind; attracting governments and leaders to a vision of the future where nations will be ruled with justice, wisdom and care; working secretly, slowly, unseen, opening our eyes to see the plight of the hungry; opening our ears to hear the cries of the distressed; opening our hands to give where help is needed; opening our hearts to love as you first loved us. Working secretly, slowly, unseen.

We pray for your Spirit within our churches, disturbing us, changing us, turning us outward, pushing and pulling us on: we need the miracle of the hidden power of your love, working secretly, slowly, unseen. We need your miracles Lord, in a world stale with bad news. We need the miracles of your love that shock and shake us up - coming suddenly, strangely in full view. The coming of a startling event that changes the way of a nation; the coming of one person that starts a freedom movement; the coming of a cry for help that leads to tremendous giving; the coming of life and health to the sick and depressed; the coming of forgiveness in a situation of hatred; the coming of God's Spirit afresh, into dreary exhausted lives. We need the miracles of your love that shock and shake us up, coming suddenly, strangely in full view.

Surprise us again Lord, work your miracles in us, work your miracles through us.

In the name of 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 364 – O for a thousand tongues to sing

- 1) O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of his grace!
- 2) My gracious Master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim,
To spread through all the earth abroad
The honours of your name.
- 3) Jesus - the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life, and health, and peace.
- 4) He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.
- 5) He speaks; and, listening to his voice,
New life the dead receive;
The mournful, broken hearts rejoice.
The humble poor believe.
- 6) See all your sins on Jesus laid:
The Lamb of God was slain;
His soul was once an offering made
That all may heaven gain.
- 7) In Christ, our Head, you then shall know,
Shall feel, your sins forgiven,
Anticipate your heaven below,
And own that love is heaven.

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Benediction

May the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be upon us now and for evermore. Amen.