

Worship at Home – Sunday 19 June 2022

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use at home. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people across the Methodist Connexion are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.
Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.
For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.
In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also.
The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land.
O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker.
For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

Hymn: STF 693 Beauty for brokenness - <https://youtu.be/08utbDFP9AE>

1. Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair, Lord, in your suffering world this is our prayer. Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace, sunrise to sunset, your kingdom increase!	rights for the weak, voices to plead the cause of those who can't speak. God of the poor, friend of the weak, give us compassion we pray: melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain; come, change our love from a spark to a flame.	freedoms to share. Peace to the killing-fields, scorched earth to green, Christ for the bitterness, his cross for the pain. 4. Rest for the ravaged earth, oceans and streams plundered and poisoned -- our future, our dreams. Lord, end our madness, carelessness, greed; make us content with the things that we need.	Refrain 5. Lighten our darkness, breathe on this flame until your justice burns brightly again; until the nations learn of your ways, seek your salvation and bring you their praise. Refrain
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Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

Let us pray together

God of earthquake, wind, and fire, God of healing touch and uniting love, God of our ancestors, neighbours, and grandchildren, God of deafening silence and quiet harmonies – We are drawn by Your Spirit calling out to our own souls, for You are the source of all life, the home to which we will return. In You we find strength and comfort, safety and courage. May all that is in us, praise You, O God! We are crafted in Your divine image: we rejoice; we fall short of Your perfect love: we lament; we contribute to the pain of others: we confess; we fear what we do not understand: we repent. In our return to You, welcoming God, we seek Your healing, transforming touch, knowing You will not withhold it, not now, not ever: praise be to You, O God! Amen

Today's Reading from the New Testament – Galatians 3: 23 - 29

Today's Gospel Reading – Luke 8: 26 - 39

Time to Reflect

There are a lot of questions in today's Gospel reading! After crossing the Sea of Galilee in a boat and calming the storm en route, Jesus and the disciples arrive in the Gentile land of the Gerasenes. There they meet a vulnerable man – demon possessed, naked, cast out from the town, living alone among the tombs. He doesn't ask for help or healing, rather, Jesus unprompted commands the evil spirit to leave

the man. The evil spirit objects, recognising Jesus as the Son of the Most High God, and asks Jesus to leave it alone. And it admits it is not one spirit but many, a legion.

Whatever we think of demons, they were intensely real to this man and the people of Gerasa. This man was suffering from violent mental illness, he was too dangerous to be among people, he could break free of all the restraints they placed on him. People were terrified of him, but Jesus faced him calmly. Who are the people we are scared of? Who do we choose not to associate with because of our fear?

When Jesus cast out the demons into the pigs, the man sees visible evidence that he is freed. He regains his right mind, he dresses in clothes, and he sits calmly at Jesus' feet – adopting the posture of a disciple. When Jesus freed the man from the spirits that possessed him, he also freed the people from the threat the man had posed to them. But they still weren't happy.

Why do we find it difficult to believe in the possibility of change and redemption? One of our less pleasant human attitudes is the willingness to continue to condemn people because of what has happened previously. To keep them locked up in our perceptions of the past. Think of the difficulty convicted prisoners have on release from prison to convince people that they have changed.

This story is not just a healing miracle; Jesus comes with cosmic power. He has just calmed the powers of nature, calming the wind and the raging waves; here He casts out the demons, the powers of evil. Jesus comes to challenge and cast out every power that prevents people living fully and freely. This challenges us to think of the powers that destroy a human life today. Think of those enslaved by addictions. Think of those who are haunted by the past, tortured by their memories – survivors of abuse, sexual, physical, and emotional – the abuse continues in the mind long after the physical act has ceased.

The people of the neighbourhood do not celebrate when the man is restored to full health; their fear continues to hold them captive. Jesus sends him back to live among his former neighbours to witness to them of what God has done for him. The man, knowing who has healed him, goes about proclaiming what Jesus has done for him, witnessing to Jesus, the Son of God. Do we?

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

For our world and its pain and uncertainty, Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer. For our nation, our Queen and our government, Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer. For the city, town or village in which we live, and those who serve us in body, mind and spirit, Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer. On those who are frightened, unwell, alone, or overwhelmed. On our church, on other churches we share with and the Church throughout the world, Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer. For each of us, right now, longing for love, Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to STF 655 We cannot measure how you feel - <https://youtu.be/OrNoQisGbDw>

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| 1. We cannot measure how you heal
or answer every sufferer's prayer,
yet we believe your grace responds
where faith and doubt unite to care.
Your hands, though bloodied on the
cross,
survive to hold and heal and warn,
to carry all through death to life
and cradle children yet unborn. | 2. The pain that will not go away,
the guilt that clings from things long
past,
the fear of what the future holds,
are present as if meant to last.
But present too is love which tends
the hurt we never hoped to find,
the private agonies inside,
the memories that haunt the mind. | 3. So some have come who need your help
and some have come to make amends
as hands which shaped and saved the world
are present in the touch of friends.
Lord, let your Spirit meet us here
to mend the body, mind, and soul,
to disentangle peace from pain
and make your broken people whole.
<i>John L. Bell (b. 1949) and Graham Maule (b. 1958)</i> |
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A prayer of blessing

May God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, go with us now. May God's Spirit be on us, on those we love, and on those for who we should pray, this and always.