

Sunday, 17th January 2021

Worship led by: Ruth Barratt and Gareth Rutledge


The Methodist Church

Ashbourne Circuit 22/11

Welcome

Psalm 46: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth should change

Though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;

Though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult

Be still and know that I am God!

The Lord of hosts is with us, The God of Jacob is our refuge.

Hymn: STF 20 Be still for the presence of the Lord

Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here ;
come bow before him now
with reverence and fear :
in him no sin is found —
we stand on holy ground.
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around ;
he burns with holy fire,
with splendour he is crowned :
how awesome is the sight —
our radiant King of light !
Be still, for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place ;
he comes to cleanse and heal,
to minister his grace :
no work too hard for him —
in faith receive from him.
Be still, for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place.

David J. Evans (b. 1957)

Prayers

Father, we have come together to worship you, even though we are physically separated. Your love has followed us all our days, sometimes without us realising it.



You have given us life, and all that we have, so that we might live to serve you.
And when we failed to respond, because we thought we knew better, your love still pursued us. You sent your Son into the world to demonstrate this love to all people.

Father, in this quiet time, we recognise that we still fail you and go our own way.

We have sometimes failed to listen to you, we have gone our own way, even when we knew it was wrong.

So we ask your forgiveness. We pray that you will grant us your Spirit, so that we may be aware of your presence and follow more closely the way of Christ.

The wonderful thing is that we thank you for listening to our prayers and answering our requests, but in your time, not ours.

You do this because you care for us, this continually shown in through Jesus Christ our Lord,

in whose name we pray,
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father....

Reading: 1 Samuel 3 :1-10

The LORD Calls Samuel

3 The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions. **2** One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. **3** The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the LORD, where the ark of God was. **4** Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am." **5** And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down. **6** Again the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." "My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."

7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

8 A third time the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. 9 So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

Gospel reading:

Reading: John 1: 43-51

43 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

44 Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. 45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

46 "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked.

"Come and see," said Philip.

47 When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."

48 "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

49 Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel."

50 Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that." 51 He then added, "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man."

Video of Farewell to Stromness

(Peter Maxwell Davies - Farewell to Stromness for Piano (1980) Martin Jones, piano)

<https://uk.video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=mcafee&p=farewell+to+stromness+piano#id=4&vid=377e06884b46cf9f6fc0ee5ad429dda&action=view>

A time to reflection

Today our theme is listening, it's a theme that links our two readings together.



In our OT reading, Samuel the young boy living the life of a priest in priestly clothes, sleeping close to the arc of God hears a voice four times. Three times he mistakes it for Ely his mentor and teacher. It is Ely who helps Samuel really listen the fourth time and to discern it is God calling him and Samuel listens.

The thread of listening takes us to our reading from the first chapter of John's Gospel.

In our reading today we hear that Jesus **finds** Phillip. The group of disciples have taken shape **by finding**, some by finding each other, others are found by Jesus. It tells us of the important mission Jesus brings, that deeply connects to the disciples understanding of their history and prophecy. This draws them to Jesus except for Nathaniel where there is a hitch!

Nathaniel is sceptical and challenges Phillip to prove to him that anything good can come out of Nazareth. In the end it is not seeing Jesus that draws Nathaniel but **hearing** Jesus in conversation. Nathaniel listens.

He hears:

- Jesus affirming him and being 'for' him "here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit"
- What seals it for Nathaniel is that Jesus knows him 'I saw you under the fig tree'

It tells us two more things about Jesus.

- Jesus is inviting, he invites us into relationship through affirmation of who we are
- He knows us intimately. Have a look at the poetry of Psalm 139 that tells us we are known from our very beginnings; God is intricately woven into our very being. Jesus tells us here that this is what **his life** will point towards.

Just as Nathaniel responds so we are drawn towards such a response. Nathaniel listens and hears and responds.

For me writing this sermon rather earlier than I would normally do, I am really aware that I am hearing it in the light of a raised concern about

Covid and NHS coping, finding ourselves significantly restricted again.

I am, like us all, having to think about and make decisions in relation to Covid, it is unavoidably part of our lives, we can't ignore it.

We have all had to do a lot of listening this year

- We have had to listen to what we have been asked to do or not do
- We have had to decide how much we can listen and hear the daily figures of disease and death, the impact of Covid across the world

This listening has been hard listening, it may have gone against our inclinations sometimes, it may have worried us, it may have made us feel very uncertain and even hopeless. We may feel we want to stop listening!

Listening though as Nathaniel found can also transform lives and situations. We see in the Gospels that JC very often prefaces encounters with something like 'what do you want' he listens to where people are and leads them into to new places from there.

We've all had to listen but **we can all** listen to each other

- In this time of Pandemic and economic upheaval, lots of peoples lives have been uprooted and changed and limited
- And people may need that story heard
- Listening is about affirming and that in practical terms means letting go of judgement
- Listening is not about finding solutions its about really hearing, letting people know that you hear what they are going through
- It maybe also be 'how can I help you at this time'
- Listening is about suspending our own agenda and this can include suspending our own experience, and just being there in the moment for a person
- Being listened to helps us to see things more clearly and see how we can find a way forward
- We can all do this AND we can all receive this.

This has a powerful potential to ease all our journeys through difficult times and something positive for us to reflect on and perhaps do more of AMEN

Hymn STF 663 I the Lord of sea and sky

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
my hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

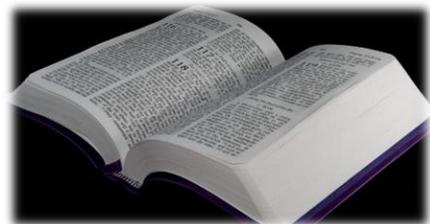
*Here I am, Lord.
Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord,
if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain;
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send?

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts are satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?

Daniel L. Schutte (b. 1947)

Prayers of Intercession



During this time of Pandemic, I have tried something new to me. I have tried to use the Psalms in my praying.

Psalms are poetry and we should remember that, we have to hear them and see beyond their face value to reflect on their more than meanings.

- Psalms are mostly **not** about people whose lives are settled and sure **they are**
- Mostly about people living at the edge of life, struggling with raw emotions, sometimes grief, sometimes disappointment and all else
- they encourage us to be honest with God, expose our vulnerability **and**
- trust in a God where dying, reaching out lowest will always find a place of rising, **we will rise** with hope to face the future.

As so this morning I offer you prayers for this pandemic using verses adapted from the Psalms. I have tried to embrace wide aspects of how we have found ourselves, pray where you can.....

The Psalmist says: **How can we sing the Lords song in a foreign land? (137:4)**

We pray for your Church who longs to sing your praises again in the place that they know in these strange and dislocating times

Through your creative spirit, continue to fire our imaginations to proclaim your unchanging love in new ways

Nurture our resilience and hope for the future.



The Psalmist says: **We cast our burden upon you, o Lord, And you sustain us**

We pray for those in authority who face difficult decisions

That affect the lives of us all

Grant them wisdom, integrity and courage.

The psalmist says: **O Lord, you are abundant in power; your understanding is beyond measure (147:5)**

We give thanks for the skill, knowledge and dedication of all those involved in vaccine development. We are truly thankful and ask your blessing on them

And now as we face the logistics of not only our own vaccination programmes but vaccination programmes worldwide

We pray for justice and fairness in their delivery to all peoples.

The Psalmist says: **The Lord upholds all who are falling, and raises up those who are bowed down (145:14)**

We pray for all those who are facing hardship, The great inequalities of this virus, employment fragility, business survival, economic inequality and health inequality,

We pray that you will sustain and support them

We remember all those responding to Christs command to love one another

Through the work of foodbanks and charities

And through acts of simple kindness.

The Psalmist says: **In the day of trouble you answer us, O Lord, and you protect us; you send us help you give us support (20: 1-2)**

In the face of COVID-19 we pray for all those who care and treat the sick throughout the care and health services of our country and across the world

We pray that they may find new strength to continue to reach deeply into their resources

bringing restoration and renewal for all those they care for

The Psalmist says: **Lord, you give strength to your people and you bless them with peace (29:11)**

We pray for all in education, teachers, lecturers and children and young

People

Inspire them to continue to find courage and innovation, to carry on,

Protect those who are feeling vulnerable and give fresh hope to those who feel overwhelmed.

The Psalmist says: **The Lord is near to the broken hearted and saves the crushed in spirit (34:18)**

We pray for all those who are anxious for loved ones, friends, neighbours,

Those who feel isolated and alone and those who feel anxious in the face of COVID-19

That you will enable them to feel trust in you and grasp a sense of hope in the future.

The Psalmist says: **O God, for you alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from you. You alone are my rock, my salvation my fortress. (62: 5-6)**

We pray for the grieving,

We hold the load of the thousands who have
lost loved ones out of time due to COVID-19

We embrace them with weeping and mourning

We pray comfort and peace becomes theirs.

Lord of life

In this time of crisis for our families and
communities, for our nation and our world

We turn to you in faith to seek guidance and
receive your blessing,

Knowing that nothing in all creation can
separate us from your love, made known in your
Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

We lay our prayers before the one who walks
with us in whatever lies ahead.

Jesus Christ our Lord

So be it, **AMEN.**

Hymn: STF 545 Be thou my vision

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art ;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord ;
be thou my great Father, thy child let me be ;
be thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight ;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might ;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower :
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my
power.

Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise :
be thou mine inheritance now and always ;
be thou and thou only the first in my heart :
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won ;
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Irish, 8th century

translated by Mary Elizabeth Byrne (1880–1931)

versified by Eleanor Henrietta Hull (1860–1935) (alt.)



A prayer of blessing

May God's grace fill our lives,
Christ's love overflow in our hearts and
the joy and peace of the Spirit challenge and
inspire us today and always. Amen

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