



Date 8.11. 2020 Remembrance Sunday

Otley, Menston, & Burley in Wharfedale

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**Introduction:** Welcome to all sharing in this service, and a special thank you to the children who have done pictures of poppies for display. We love to see your art work and it is great that your pictures will show people who are sad that you are thinking of them today.

## Hymn 455 All my hope on God is founded

All my hope on God is founded:  
He doth still my trust renew.  
Me thro' change and chance He guideth,  
Only good and only true.  
God unknown, He alone  
Calls my heart to be His own.

Human and e pride and earthly glory,  
Sword and crown betray our trust:  
What with care and toil we fashion  
Tower and temple fall to dust.  
But God's power, hour by hour,  
Is my temple and my tower.

God's great goodness aye endureth,  
Deep His wisdom, passing thought:  
Splendour, light and life attend Him,

Beauty springeth out of naught.  
Evermore from His store  
Newborn worlds rise and adore.

Daily doth the almighty giver  
Bounteous gifts on us bestow.  
His desire our soul delighteth,  
Pleasure leads us where we go.  
Love doth stand at His hand;  
Joy doth wait on His command.

Still from earth to God eternal  
Sacrifice of praise be done,  
High above all praises praising  
For the gift of Christ His Son.  
Christ doth call one and all:  
Ye who follow shall not fall.

## Prayers

We thank you Lord, that in this world of change and uncertainty, there is one thing we can count on - your unfailing love. From everlasting to everlasting, you are God, you are love, eternal love. The brief span of our lives is but a moment, yet we are infinitely precious in your sight. You so loved the world that you sent your only Son Jesus Christ, to be our saviour. And he is with us now, here in the midst of us, to cheer and to guide. We praise your holy name, and lift up the name of Jesus, as we bring our worship to you, for there is no other name that is higher, in the earth and the heavens.

This is a day of remembrance, a day for gratitude, as we contemplate what others have given for our freedom – the sacrifice of their lives. It is a day when many recall their losses, their sadnesses, and their wounds, mental and physical. May they be comforted by our standing with them in solidarity, and we pray this day may bless them with peace and healing.

We long for peace in our world, for healing of divisions, for justice, for an end to hatred and prejudice. Search our hearts Lord, and may that peace begin with us, as we ask your forgiveness for those things we do which hurt others.

As one family in Christ, we bring our prayers together as we say

**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.

**Scripture** O.T. Joshua 24: 1-3a, 14-18  
Gospel : John 12: vs 20-26

## **Hymn 662 Have you heard God's voice, has your heart been stirred**

Have you heard God's voice; has your heart been stirred?  
Are you still prepared to follow?  
Have you made a choice to remain and serve,  
though the way be rough and narrow?

*Refrain: Will you walk the path that will cost you much  
and embrace the pain and sorrow?  
Will you trust in One who entrusts to you  
the disciples of tomorrow?*

Will you use your voice; will you not sit down  
when the multitudes are silent?  
Will you make a choice to stand your ground  
when the crowds are turning violent?

*Refrain*

In your city streets will you be God's heart?  
Will you listen to the voiceless?  
Will you stop and eat, and when friendships start,  
will you share your faith with the faithless?

*Refrain*

Will you watch the news with the eyes of faith  
and believe it could be different?  
Will you share your views using words of grace?  
Will you leave a thoughtful imprint?

*We will walk the path that will cost us much  
and embrace the pain and sorrow.  
We will trust in One who entrusts to us  
the disciples of tomorrow.*

### **Reflection** Vivien Pitts: **Choosing to follow, choosing to serve**

The videos can be viewed at [www.burleymethodist.org](http://www.burleymethodist.org)  
Alternatively, the written text is provided below

**Silence for remembrance.** This is introduced, and closed, by the playing of a verse from hymn 132: *O God our help in ages past*, and accompanied by pictures of the war memorials in Burley, Menston and Otley.

### **Prayers of intercession**

God of self- sacrifice, God of compassion, God of love: we pray for

Those on the front line in our hospitals, battling Covid infection and working so hard at risk to themselves, to save the lives of others

Those who have self- sacrificially volunteered to be guinea pigs in drug trials, when at this point the risks are unknown

Those who give up their own freedom to care for the vulnerable, the elderly and infirm, in residential care and in homes, to look after them and keep them safe

Those who put their lives on the line today to protect us – armed forces and the police

We give thanks today for those who in previous generations gave their lives for our freedom, and we pray for all who bear the scars of war, mental and physical.

Lord may we expunge war from the earth. Bless the peacemakers, those who work for justice, and those who strive to build friendship between peoples.

O God you sent your Son into the world not to be served but to serve, and to lay down his life for us.

Drawing upon your saving grace, may we follow his example; to use our gifts in the service of Christ, and to care for our neighbours near and far.

Prayer of St Ignatius

Teach us, good Lord,  
to serve you as you deserve,  
to give and not to count the cost,  
to fight and not to heed the wounds,  
to toil and not to seek for rest,  
to labour and not to ask for any reward,  
save that of knowing that we do your will. Amen.

**Hymn 705 :**

It is God who hold the nations in the hollow of his hand;  
It is God whose light is shining in the darkness of the land;  
It is God who builds his City on the Rock and not on sand:  
May the living God be praised!

When a thankful nation, looking back, has cause to celebrate  
Those who win our admiration by their service to the state;  
When self-giving is a measure of the greatness of the great:  
May the living God be praised!

It is God whose purpose summons us to use the present hour;  
Who recalls us to our senses when a nation's life turns sour;  
In the discipline of freedom we shall know his saving power:  
May the living God be praised!

God reminds us every sunrise that the world is ours on lease -  
For the sake of life tomorrow, may our love for it increase;  
May all races live together, share its riches, be at peace:  
May the living God be praised!

**Benediction:** Now to the God who has chosen us from the foundation of the world, be blessing and honour and praise. Where Christ leads, let us gladly follow. And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be upon us this day, and for ever more. Amen

To play us out - an organ recital of **Hymn 545 Be thou my vision**

Freedom. O sweet freedom! It's what they fought for, those people of previous generations, whom we remember today. But, events today are causing us to think more deeply about what exactly freedom is. Take the wearing of masks and submission to social restrictions for an example. Some say we should claim absolute freedom to live as we choose, to retain normality, even if the exercise of our freedom might actually harm others. I wonder what they would think of that, those who lie in their war graves? Those who gave their lives so that others might have precious freedom?

Our Old Testament reading from the book of Joshua illustrates that we are free, free to choose. This is how God treats us. There is no compulsion. Joshua, who has taken over leadership of the Israelites after Moses, leading his people into the promised land, reminds them of everything the Lord has done for them, but now challenges them with this once and for all choice. Mindful that they have not always been faithful, that some have worshipped other gods, and made idols for themselves, and even now are enticed away into the cults and practices of surrounding peoples,

Joshua says to them, *Choose this day whom you will serve. ...As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.*

Notice, he doesn't say choose whom you will worship, but choose whom you will serve. Choosing to serve. It is utterly humbling in my view, how many people are doing just that in this Covid crisis. Retired nurses, choosing to go back to work, to help out even on the very front line of the Covid wards. Volunteers, choosing to be guinea pigs testing new drugs, even though there may be risks to themselves of as yet unknown side effects, and there is even the possibility that the medication could make them very ill, not better. Residential care workers choosing to give up their freedom, to stay with their residents under lockdown, not going out, so as to minimise the risk of infection coming in to the home. Thank God for them. Today, we are remembering previous generations who had wars to fight on our behalf, especially remembering those who didn't come back. We honour their sacrifice, and perhaps like me, you think of the Covid crisis as our war - the war this generation has to fight. Are we on side? How are we choosing to behave? Where do we look for guiding light as we go forward?

I write this sermon in a week when the American people are faced with a choice at the ballot box, confronted with the matter of choosing, but not just between one candidate and another. It is choosing which values they esteem most highly. Which values they believe they should hold most dear and should guide their nation as they go forward. One candidate describes the election as fighting for the soul of the nation. Which values do we hold dear? Which values inform our choices?

This is a time of crisis, when people are confused, anxious, tossed this way and that. Why do I think Jesus looks on us with compassion? Because that is what he did seeing the crowds on the Galilean hillside, whom he described as harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus looks on us with compassion, and calls us to his side. He teaches us, guides us, and feeds us. He is our light. Maybe we could all take time during lockdown to re-visit the gospel stories of Jesus, and reflect on his words, and seek his light. But his call to follow is not without cost, not without challenge.

In our gospel passage Jesus talks of self-giving love. He talks about a grain of wheat falling into the earth. It dies, but from it arises a harvest. He says those who love their life will lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. *Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also.*

Where I am... what do we take that to mean? The paradise of heavenly rest? Maybe. But first, among the lonely and isolated. Among the stateless and the homeless. Among the despairing. Among those who cannot feed their families. Among the bereaved. Among those who have lost their jobs and are anxious about the future. On the front line in hospitals. These are some of the places where I believe Jesus is, and is calling us to be.

I believe God is a choosing God. God has chosen us, not in some random arbitrary selection of one over another, but in the choice between loving us to the ends of the earth, and giving up on us. God has chosen to forgive us even though we don't deserve it. After all, are we not just like the people in Joshua's time? Are we not sometimes faithless? Do we not sometimes allow ourselves to be lured away by the self-serving values of the present age? God chose to give up his only Son to save the world not to condemn it. God chose to offer grace freely to all. We are chosen.

We are chosen, not conscripted. We are free to close the door on God, or to open the door, and invite God into our lives. Faced with the challenges of a global pandemic, and all its effects both short and long term, on our society, this is a choosing moment. How will we go forward? What will be our guiding values? What will be our guiding light? Who leads us? In whom do we place our trust?

Our opening hymn is a proclamation of faith by one who has chosen. *All my hope on God is founded; he doth still my trust renew. Me through change and chance he guideth, only good and only true. God unknown, he alone, calls my heart to be his own.*

So, how are we going to answer Joshua? *Choose this day whom you will serve.* Let the words of another hymn writer be our prayer: *Abba, Father, let me be yours and yours alone.* May we use the freedom love gives us, to go with Christ into the places where he is. And to Jesus be all the praise, the honour and the glory. Amen