



The Methodist Church

Otley, Menston, & Burley in Wharfedale

June 6th 2021

Call to Worship

Welcome to our service this morning. Some words from Psalm 130: *“Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.”*

Song

Come, now is the time to worship.
Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship.
Come, just as you are before your God, come.
*One day every tongue
will confess you are God,
one day every knee will bow.*

*Still, the greatest treasure remains
for those who gladly choose you now.*

Come, now is the time to worship...

Prayers

Our opening prayers are taken from Nick Fawcett’s Prayers for all Seasons

Let us pray:

Almighty God, we come together to praise you, to stand once more in your presence, to consider your handiwork, and to remind ourselves of all that you have done in our lives, and all that you are doing, and all that you will continue to do. Help us, as we lift up our songs, to lift up our hearts also, as we read your word, to hear your voice also, as we unite in prayer, to be united with you in mind and spirit, as we hear your message proclaimed, to respond to your call and to accept your challenge. Help us to truly praise you, not just in words and appearance, but in our hearts, our thoughts, and our lives. So may we offer to you the truest expression of our praise, a life of faithful discipleship, a love for you and one another, and a living commitment to Christ. We would bring you our worship, receive our praise.

Forgive us that we have not worshipped you as often or as fully as we should, that we have not praised you with heart and soul and mind, that we have glimpsed so little of your greatness. Forgive us for failing to appreciate your mercy, for forgetting your countless blessings, and for losing our sense of awe and wonder before you. Open our eyes afresh to your splendour, our hearts to your love, our minds to your purpose, and our spirits to your presence, and so, assured of your forgiveness and your renewing power, help us to praise you not just in words, but in lives offered to you in glad and joyful service. Lord of all, in your mercy, hear us. In the name of the living Christ. Amen

Readings

But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—“I believed, and so I spoke”—we also believe, and so we speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. **(2 Cor. 4: 13 – 5: 1)**

And the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, “He has gone out of his mind.” And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.”

And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

“Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”— for they had said, “He has an unclean spirit.”

Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters^[a] are outside, asking for you.” And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.” **(Mark 3: 20 – 35)**

Song

Amazing grace how sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found
was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
and grace my fears relieved
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed.

*My chains are gone, I've been set free
my God, my Saviour has ransomed me
and like a flood his mercy reigns*

unending love, amazing grace.

The Lord has promised good to me
his word my hope secures
as love as life endures.

My chains are gone,.....sung twice

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow
the sun forbear to shine
but God who called me here below
will be forever mine, will be forever mine
you are forever mine.

Reflection

Pauline Tate

“Co-heirs with Christ”

An illustration from Tom Wright's commentary on Mark: “From the safety of my armchair, I watched the mass demonstration on the TV news. It started peacefully, at least on the surface. Banners and placards gave out a strong message, but the crowd seemed relaxed enough. The police were standing well back, watching for trouble but quite cheerful. Some of them joked with the marchers as they went by.

Nobody knew how it happened, but suddenly everything changed. There was a scuffle and a scrap, and a whole section of the crowd stopped marching and started shouting at the police. Some threw bottles. The police charged the demonstrators, swinging batons at random. The battle quickly spread up and down the street. Shops were smashed, hundreds were arrested. The close-up TV shots, and the recordings of what the people were saying at the time, made it clear what had happened. The police had decided that the demonstrators were ‘scum’. The demonstrators had decided that the police were ‘pigs’. Once they had labelled like that they could do what they liked. They were no longer dealing with humans, but with animals, and dirty ones at that. Raise the stakes, stick a label on people, and then it doesn't matter what you do and who you hurt.”

Matthew 10 verse 36: ‘a man's worse enemies will be the members of his own family’ and in the first part of our gospel reading Jesus' family have come to the conclusion that Jesus had come to the end of his senses and should be taken home. They had heard what people were saying about him and that the people thought he had gone mad. Why? Mark would have us believe that it was because he had gone without food in order to minister to the crowd gathered around him.

Of course like any large crowd you will find among them the good, the bad and the ugly – some gathering in peace, some gathering to stir up trouble and some actually causing mayhem. The scribes who had joined the crowd decided he was and labelled him as the devil, simply because he was driving out demons and healing the sick. They were ignorant and it would appear that even his own family were thinking along the same lines. However, Jesus comes back at them, not with name calling but by attempting to put them straight and talking in parables. ‘How can satan drive out satan’? We see all too often today what happens when a country divides itself – it really does fall apart.

When Jesus tells the parable of the strong man and his house is he talking about himself as the strong man as John the Baptist had said, ‘he is someone stronger than me’? Certainly the scribes are not enamoured by what he is doing because it doesn't suit their purpose – Jesus isn't one of them and so they set out to label him as an enemy and try their best to turn the crowd against him. If a riot had broken out they would lay the blame at Jesus' feet. But Jesus doesn't return like for like instead he puts them straight by pointing out the flaw in their argument and gives them a rather stern warning, Verse 29: ‘but whoever says evil things against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, because he committed an eternal sin’. As Tom Wright puts it, ‘his critics had backed themselves into a corner. Once you label what is in fact the work of the Holy Spirit as the work of the devil, there's no way back. It's like holding a conspiracy theory; all the evidence you see will simply confirm your belief. You will be blind to the truth. It isn't that God gets angry with one sin in particular. It's rather that if you decide firmly that the doctor who is offering to perform a life-saving operation on you is in fact a sadistic murderer, you will never give your consent to the operation’.

But we, I pray, know better than the scribes and are fully aware of the benefits of living as one of God's children, adopted into his family as we are – warts and all!

Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones said, 'The most important thing of all is not that my sins have been forgiven, nor that I may enjoy certain experiences and blessings as a Christian. The thing that should astonish me...overwhelm me is that I am a child of God, one of God's people'.

When I was in my teenage years I had always wanted an older brother for the obvious reason that he would bring home his friends. Since becoming a Christian I have one but for very different reasons. Jesus is not only our Saviour he is our brother too and our friend. That is what Jesus says to those around him. Yes, he had an earthly family but he also has an extended family in all those who believe in God and do what God asks of them. But back then and even in some places today what he said would have been scandalous. Family ties were strong and for Jesus to say what he did would have been offensive. It would appear that at this point in Jesus' ministry, Mary had not fully comprehended what his life was about and for that reason the family travel to take him home. We can only guess what her reaction would have been when Jesus spoke those words, 'who is my mother'. As someone once wrote – 'here is God slicing through tradition of family life and setting up a new family of those who believed in Jesus then and now. The fallen race would rise forgiven, restored'.

At the beginning of our passage from 2 Corinthians, Paul quotes from Psalm 116. 'I spoke because I believed'. The introduction to this letter in the Good News Bible says that this letter was written during a difficult period in Paul's relationship with the church at Corinth. Some members had evidently made strong attacks against Paul but he shows a deep longing for reconciliation and expressed his great joy when this is brought about. I find this a very comforting passage. You could say it's the light at the end of the tunnel. To know there is something to look forward to, especially on those days when we feel low in spirits for whatever reason.

I found the following in some Bible Study Notes: 'A large part of life centres around anticipation. How much we would lose if we were to wake up one day to the unexpected announcement 'Christmas in 10 minutes'! The enjoyment in many of life's events is built on the fact that we have time to anticipate them. Christmas, Easter, holidays, sporting events. All grow in value because of the hours we spend looking forward to them eagerly running through our minds the fun, challenges and excitement they'll bring.'

The writer goes on to say, 'I think about the value of anticipation and the thrill it can bring to the human heart when I read Psalm 30: 5, 'weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning'. The psalmist is declaring the comforting idea that our earthly sorrow lasts but a short time when compared with the anticipated joy that will be in heaven and lasts forever. Paul writes a similar idea in 2 Corinthians 4: 17, where we discover that our 'light affliction' leads to a glory of eternal value. For now, those of us who weep can dwell on hope instead of hopelessness and anticipation instead of sorrow. It may be night time in our hearts, but just ahead lies the dawn of eternity. And with it, God promises the endless joy of heavenly morning'.

Paul in his letter is saying suffering is to be turned into triumph! Regardless of our frailties we are not crushed. As JB Phillips put it, 'we are knocked down but not knocked out'. Whatever this earthly life throws at us we continue forward in anticipation of our goal and we do so in the strength of God focused on a new life in a new home. And if we fall along the way – who are we going to blame? C.S. Lewis wrote that it is as if we ride with our backs to the engine...we have no notion of what stage of the journey we have reached; that we can only understand a story when we have heard it all – well God's stories always end well! Trust him. Amen

Prayers of Intercession

Our prayers of Intercession taken from Nick Fawcett's Prayer for all Seasons. Let us pray:

Loving God, we bring to you our world of so much pain, a world you care for so deeply that you willingly gave your all for it, living and dying among us through your Son, Jesus Christ. Reach out again in mercy, and heal our wounds.

We bring to you causes of so much suffering – the sin of greed, denying the many their share of this earth's riches to the benefit of the few; the sin of waste, wantonly squandering the resources you have given with no thought of future generations; the sin of intolerance, dividing families, communities and nations through a refusal to engage in dialogue; the sin of pride, thinking too highly of ourselves and too poorly of others; the sin of indifference, caring too little about you, too little about anything. Reach out again in mercy, and heal our wounds.

We pray for those who pay the price of human folly – the poor and the hungry, the homeless and dispossessed, victims of war and violence, crime and cruelty; all who are deprived of love and denied hope. Reach out again in mercy, and heal our wounds.

Loving God, come again to our world through your Son, our Saviour. Mend our divisions, forgive our folly, and guide all our affairs. Reach out again in mercy, and heal our wounds. In the Name of Christ we ask it. 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.

Song

My Jesus, my Saviour,
Lord there is none like you.
All of my days I want to praise
the wonders of your mighty love.
My comfort, my shelter,
tower of refuge and strength,
let every breath, all that I am,
never cease to worship you.

*Shout to the Lord all the earth, let us sing,
power and majesty, praise to the King.
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
at the sound of your name.
I sing for joy at the work of your hands.
Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand.
Nothing compares to the promise I have in you.*

Sending Prayer

God of all life, you have called us as your family, and brought us together in doing your will. Help us, in our work and in our homes, to trust in your strength and to live in the light of your love. And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. Amen.

Burley in Wharfedale Methodist Church CCLI. 12475