



Newsletter

14th March 2021

Daily Bible Readings

Monday 15th:	Psalm 107:1-16; Exodus 15:22-27; Hebrews 3:1-6
Tuesday 16th:	Psalm 107:1-16; Numbers 20:1-13; 1 Corinthians 10:6-13
Wednesday 17th:	Psalm 107:1-16; Isaiah 60:15-22; John 8:12-20
Thursday 18th:	Psalm 51:1-12; Isaiah 30:15-18; Hebrews 4:1-13
Friday 19th:	Psalm 51:1-12; Exodus 30:1-10; Hebrews 4:14-5:4
Saturday 20th:	Psalm 51:1-12; Habakkuk 3:2-13; John 12:1-11

This week's zoom service details are:

- Call: 0203 051 2874
- You will be asked to enter the meeting ID: 858 1773 2135
- You may be asked for a participant ID or passcode: 318008

Happy Birthday wishes go to Jenny whose birthday is on 17th March. Phyllis' funeral is on 17th March and is being Live Streamed. If you would like to watch this on your computers, laptops or IPads the connection to use is: www.obitus.com/ username: Xoh00541 and the password is: 848349. It is advised that you make the connection before the 17th March to ensure you can receive it. The service starts at 11.20am and the connection can be made 5 minutes beforehand. Also if you want to pay your respects and are able to get to Wakering UMC or along the High Street near Phyl's home by 10.45am, it will be very much appreciated. Brian Gameson's son, Richard, is in hospital quite unwell. Please keep Richard in your prayers. Take care everyone, Jackie

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Let your word be in our mouth, O Lord, your truth in our heart and your will in our mind. Let us think only what is good and discern your presence in all that we do. Let us at all times be alive to the promptings of your Holy Spirit; through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Jakob Böhme (1575-1624)

POET'S CORNER ...

GIVE GNOME AN 'OME Written by Pauline Rayment

I thought it's time I wrote a poem
About our friend - the garden gnome
Gnomes are very undervalued, have one for a faithful friend you'd
Never find a better fellow, thoughtful, cheerful, very mellow
Never argue, cause conflict, never ever contradict
Reliable in every way, give them the vote, that's what I say
Votes for gnomes, I do infer, one should be Prime Minister
Replace our Boris with a gnome, stability in every home,
He'd stand no EU balderdash with Brexit done, he'd cut a dash
No redundancies to fear, peace and plenty every year
"Jobs for all" the nation cries, based on merit, not school ties",
But lets no get political, they only want to please us all.

They dress the same, throughout the land,
No kilts for Scots gnomes to be found
I've never seen a gnomely knee, they keep well covered up, you see,
Even when the sun is blazing, have you seen a gnome sunbathing?
No, of course not, please be wise, shorts aren't made in gnomish size.
In wintertime they must be cold, for gnome size anoraks aren't sold,
So bring them in, don't leave them out, when Jack Frost is round about.

They're not a very sporty lot, they don't play golf or putt the shot,
They don't ride bikes, or ski or fly but sit and watch the world go by.
A toadstool is a favourite place for gnomes to sit with smile on face
Smiling sweetly, looking mellow, don't eat that death cap, little fellow!
Fishing is a recreation enjoyed by gnomes across the nation
Sitting beside garden pools, with rods in hands, poor little fools
For fish to catch they'll have to wait, for rods need line and hooks and bait
These are essential for success - forever they will stay fishless.
In rain, wet through, poor little fellas, should they not have umb(e)rellas?

Headgear is compulsory, pointing high effortlessly
You wonder why their hats don't flop, their heads are pointing high on top!
If your gnome should lose his head, by falling in the flowerbed
Just stick it back, without delay, he'll live to smile another day,
All seem to have a cheery grin, perhaps they're 2 sheets to the wind!
In gnomeland, give it serious thought, razor blades just are not bought
Is it just a way of saving or do they just hate daily shaving?

But smooth chinned gnomes would not look cute
They're at their cuddly best hirsute!
Do they come to life at night, when the moon is shining bright?
Dance and sing the night away, then turn to stone before the day
To guard their secret faithfully, from the likes of you and me.

There's one thing I don't understand are there no ladies in gnomeland
Who cooks their meals, who darns their socks,
Who winds their dandelion clocks.
The fairer sex is not in sight, maybe they're all hermaphrodite

Very strange but very true, I've not seen lady gnomes, have you?
They just ignore the facts of life, and reproduce, without a wife
Have they their own genetic code, or, like Topsy have 'just growed'
The answers I will never know, they've clearly no wild oats to sow.

Sometimes their cousins can be seen, acting on the silver screen
For Snowwhite's dwarfs are their relations, loved by children of all nations.
The elves are distant cousins too, ask Terry G, he'll tell you so.
Have you yet named your garden gnome?
You should, he's part of house and home
Call him George or Archibald, Walter, Jon or Reginald
Any name you think suits him, Benjamin or maybe Jim
He'll serve you well, your whole life through
And bring you luck in all you do
So treat them well, neglect them never
And they will stay with you forever
Faithful to the very end
The garden gnome - a man's best friend!

Modern-day problems!

Hello from the Manse!

It's been interesting this past year, as we as a Country, have been divided about a lot of things and we feel that's a new thing. Likewise, fake news seems to be a staple diet of British culture and we feel that's new as well. A major concern over the last couple of months has been around what can we believe. I reckon most of us have caught at least one or two of the government press briefings in the last 12 months. How the stats about Covid have been reported has changed too, due to pressure from the press, eager to know the truth, so they can edit it.

For myself personally I've had more screen time than ever before, work and pleasure. I watched a wonderful documentary on BBC2 about how fake news isn't a new thing. During the programme they showed this picture:



The picture is of a 1940's milkman in the East End of London making his deliveries during the Blitz. The picture was used to reassure people that everything was ok and its business as usual. Propaganda as it was called then but we know as fake news, thus it seems fake news isn't new after all.

What can we rely on? The gospel (Good News) but specifically that God sees the bigger picture and takes care of us safely in his kingdom. For those in the Gospels when they heard the phrase "Kingdom of Heaven" they didn't know what to think. We have a better idea now. Sometimes we think it's a set of teaching on how to live a better life or it's another way of talking about where we go after we die.

In truth it is the spiritual realm over which God reigns as King, the fulfilment on Earth of God's Will, it's now and eternal, unlike any other kingdom, it has no physical boundaries, however that means it needs to deal with the influence of the other physical kingdom boundaries the spirit lives within. Yet for those of us who live in the Kingdom of Heaven it gives us an assurance of whatever happens, the Good News is that the bigger picture is, God is with us now and forever.

My prayer this week is that we rest in the assurance of the knowledge of the Kingdom of Heaven and focus on that.

God Bless

Pete

Sunday 14 March 2021

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

'Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His faithful love endures forever. [Psalm 107:1] Holy God, though we do not worship together in one building we worship together in one spirit and with one heart. Through our worship reveal to us your will we pray. Amen.

Hymn: Praise to the Lord (Singing the Faith 88)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen here:

[Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation! \(StF 88\) \(methodist.org.uk\)](#)

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and salvation!
All ye who hear, brothers and sisters, draw near,
praise him in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;
surely his goodness and mercy here daily attend thee:
ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
who with his love doth befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord, who doth nourish thy life and restore thee,
fitting thee well for the tasks that are ever before thee,
then to thy need he like a mother doth speed,
spreading the wings of grace o'er thee.

Praise to the Lord, who, when darkness of sin is abounding,

who, when the godless do triumph, all virtue confounding,
sheddeth his light, chaseth the horrors of night,
saints with his mercy surrounding.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before him!
Let the amen sound from his people again:
gladly for aye we adore him.

Joachim Neander (1650-1680)

Let us pray together:

Holy God,
we praise you for the faithfulness of your people down the ages.
We worship and adore you as creator of this wonderful earth, and of us made in your image.
We praise you that you are a Giving God. For our family and friends, God we thank you.
For the signs of Spring all around us, God we thank you.
For the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God we thank you.
Forgiving God, we bring you our confessions now.
We are sorry God for the times when we have failed you and ourselves.
(in a moment of quiet offer your confession to God)
We know God you are quick to forgive.
As Jesus said to many he met, 'Your sins are forgiven', it is on this promise that we too rely. We pray in Jesus' name,
Amen.

Today's Reading from the Old Testament:
Numbers 21:4-9

Today's Gospel Reading: John 3:14-21

Time to Reflect

I wonder how many times through this pandemic you have been unhappy with things and complained out loud or inwardly to yourself? Perhaps you haven't agreed with Government decisions, perhaps you have been angry at the people who seemed to mindlessly flout the rules put in place to keep us all safe, perhaps you've complained when you were unable to attend church, or if you were, you were unable to sing; there are many reasons of late why we are likely to have moaned. And this is how it was with the Israelites as they travelled slowly towards the promised land. They took their frustration out not only on their leader Moses, but also on God. They had forgotten the miracles God had performed for them, their faith was waning, and they refused to obey God's law (see Psalm 78). We see too that when the Israelites complained things only got worse. They improved at once though when the people recognised that they had sinned against God through their attitude and actions. When the bronze snake was hung on a pole the Israelites didn't anticipate the fuller meaning that Jesus would bring to this experience. In the Gospel reading Jesus explains that just as the Israelites of old were healed of the sickness caused by the snake bites by turning their gaze towards the snake on the pole, we today can be healed from the sin that pervades our lives by turning our gaze towards Jesus' death on the cross. You see it was not the bronze snake that healed the Israelites, it was their renewed belief in God's healing power, in God's compassion for them, in God's love for those created in God's image and called beloved. Today, God's healing power, compassion and love exists for each one of us too; it is there for the taking but like the Israelites we too need to recognise the times we stray away from the path of light that guides us and turn back wholeheartedly towards God. Amen.

Take some time to sit quietly in reflection.

A time of prayer

Gracious God,
We thank you for the blessings in our lives,
We pray now for those struggling at this time:
We pray for our world in these difficult times,
that your peace will reach across borders and
into the lives of all your people.

We pray for our Christian brothers and sisters
living in lands where they risk their liberty and
lives to follow you, be their courage and strong
foundation.

We pray for leaders and others in positions of
authority and power, that they will be guided by
you.

We pray for your churches who await your
direction, may your will be done.

We pray for all people suffering with ill health at
this time, for those awaiting treatment or test
results, for those recovering from operations or
illness, for those suffering with mental health
problems, may you heal them.

We pray for all who have suffered the loss of
loved ones, may you be their source of strength
to face another day.

We pray for ourselves, may we be people of
peace and justice, bringing hope to those we
interact with.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer, Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

**Hymn: Listen to a fabulous version of 'Turn
your eyes upon Jesus' here**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2tKVqZZiI4>

**or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to
mind**

A prayer of blessing

God of grace and restoration be the strength
in our lives as we go about our days, now and
forever more, Amen.

Original Materials by Rev. Zena Smith

All

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Numbers 21:4-9 (NRSV)

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a poisonous[c] serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

John 3:14-21 (NRSV)

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

Scene 4 Living with tension

In this scene, Pilate washes his hands of the responsibility for Jesus' fate, and leaves a decision up to the crowd. In this pandemic, we have experienced being under government regulations and guidelines, and also been trusted to use our judgement. This week, we consider how to respond in times where we may not agree with decisions made by others on our behalf, and how we respond when others seem to flout or bend the rules. How have we found ways to live with this tension?

The courtyard – Mark 15.6-15

Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, 'Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?' For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, 'Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?' They shouted back, 'Crucify him!' Pilate asked them, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Crucify him!' So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.



Voices

Here Family member of someone shielding

I can't understand what goes on in people's minds. When all of this started, we were all in this together – clapping for keyworkers, wearing our masks, staying home to protect one another. How quickly things can change, though this last year's been a hard one. It's all very well to say forget the rules, that officials don't know what they're talking about, we'll do what we want, it's a free country! What about those of us who have someone vulnerable to protect? No immune system means no defence against the common cold, let alone a deadly virus! Weak chests, cancer treatments, bowel disease, old age – there are so many people having to be so careful. This is the most crucial time – relaxing the rules, letting our guards down, breathing a sigh of relief because the worst is over – not for those with chronic illnesses! It's been difficult all the way along, let's be honest, having to abide by rules set by other people – whether you agree or disagree with them, it's not always been easy for anyone, we all have a lot to lose but for some of us, the odds are stacked against us. When people say a mask isn't just to protect you, it protects others from you, it really is galling when that one's ignored! I've had to find some sense of rhythm in all this, some way of coming to terms with living under constant risk – the strain of worry is draining – although some precautions now are second nature after all this time. I no longer have to think about sanitising my hands when I enter a shop; I automatically pat my pocket for keys and face-covering when I leave the house now. But dealing with other people's decisions and the consequences of them, that's more difficult to live with.

There Widow of Barabbas' victim

I can't understand what goes on in people's minds. When all of this started, we were all in this together – I was there with the rest of them, waving palm branches, laying cloaks on the road and shouting to welcome the newcomer into town, what was it – a few days ago? Oh, how quickly things can change. Now the crowd is baying for that man's blood, and what's he done? Upset the Pharisees? Said a few things they don't like? What's that compared with murder? Compared with tearing lives apart, taking husbands from wives and fathers from children? Barabbas killed my Saul. He was eventually put away for it – took long enough – but I thought I could finally sleep at night knowing he was locked away. But no, they chose him over that man Jesus – they chose to release a murderer over a religious teacher! I would laugh if it didn't hurt so much. Now no one's safe, and me and my children have to live with whatever happens next because of someone else's poor judgement! What were they thinking?! Are they just going with the crowd? Trying to please – who? Is this a political statement against this Jesus character? What could possibly justify setting a known killer loose? It's hard enough to be grieving for my husband, but dealing with the consequences of other people's decisions, that's more difficult to live with.

Scene 4 Living with tension

Reflection and conversation

- 1 How do you personally respond to: a) government guidelines you may not agree with; b) other people flouting restrictions; c) people you disagree with in a wider context?
- 2 What do you think may have been the implications for anyone who stood up against Pilate's judgement in the crowd?
- 3 Can we or should we find ways of trusting and living with other's decisions?

Listen

[Behold he comes](#) Rend Collective

[Man of sorrows](#) The Celebration Choir

Prayer action

If you have a disposable face mask, consider writing 'I wear this to show I care' across the front, and display it on a mantelpiece or somewhere prominent, to remind you that in part the reason we wear masks is to protect others as well as ourselves. Reflect on other areas of your life where your actions protect or care for others, and how this may adapt or develop once restrictions are lifted.

Wise and all-knowing God, we cannot fathom how others think, and we cannot see the full picture that you can see. Please guide us, give us discernment and courage as we learn when to stand up and contest something, and when to try and live together with tension. Give us your heart for justice, and your patience to make it happen, we pray. Amen.

Follow-up activity

Create a 'worry box'. Through this week, write down anything playing on your mind on a slip of paper, fold it up and pray over it, then place it into a worry box and entrust it to God. You may end up placing the same worry in the box again and again, but practise giving your concerns over to God.