

Poole Bay Methodist Circuit worship

Sunday 6^h September 2020

A Way of Life - Led by Rev Betto Viana

- **I would like to welcome you today to our Methodist audio worship.**
- **Today is 13th of September and I am Rev Betto Viana**
- **Come on and celebrate (Singing the Faith: 44)**

To start our worship today I would like to invite you all to stop for a minute whatever you are doing and look around you and contemplate God's presence. It does not matter where you are, or what you are doing, or feeling, or going through, God is here with you. Just let your heart feel God's presence and let the Holy Spirit warm your heart from within out.

Can I ask you to pay attention to your breathing? I know we take it for granted. It is only when something scares us or excites us that we remember we need to breathe and that we have a heart that depends on this to live. So, feel your heart. How does it sound today? Is it calm? Is it excited? Is it in despair or worried? Is it surprised? Come to God's presence as you are, bring your heart and your feelings.

Let us pray:

Living God,

We have come seeking your word,

Your way,

Your will.

As we listen together to the scriptures and reflect upon them,

As we join together in prayer,

And as we make time and space for quiet contemplation,

Speak,

Challenge,

inspire,

move and guide us.

Show us what it means to know and serve you,
 To walk the way of Christ,
 And equip us, through our being here today,
 To do that more faithfully,
 To the glory of your name.
 Amen.

- **Hymn: Speak, O Lord, as we come to you (Singing the Faith: 161)**

- **The Bible reading for today is:
 John 14: 1-7 New International Version**

14 “Do not let your **hearts be troubled**. You believe in God; believe also in me. ²My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴You know the way to the place where I am going.”

⁵Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

⁶Jesus answered, “**I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.** ⁷If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

This bible passage is a well-known one. And it is one of the favourites for funerals. It is called ‘*The last discourse*’ by the scholars as Jesus is telling his disciples he will go before them to prepare a place for them and will come back to take them with him. I think that it is a very comforting passage. Jesus’ disciples are feeling pain as Jesus is saying they will be separated and feeling lost as they do not understand what that will entail. How will the future look like without the master? What about all the things they had left behind to follow Jesus and all the things they plan to build together? What about the Kingdom? I think that’s why it is a popular Bible passage at funerals... It carries similar feelings and emotions.

And that's why I think it is a good passage for today as we are going through this pandemic and after 6 months in lockdown, we are trying to re-open our churches. So, what will we be mourning for? We miss what we had before. We are not certain how safe it is to go back or even if we will like the way things will turn out. We do not know how our finances have been affected and if our church is viable. For that kind of situation Jesus is saying: **'Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.'** What Jesus is saying is, although it looks like all is collapsing, God has a plan. What is collapsing is our plan not God's. And you probably have heard what Woody Allen once said: **'If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans!'** So, the disciples' plans, as ours now, are about to be busted and he is calling us to just trust in God and in him beyond measures, beyond even death. He has a place for each one of us in his plans. It is just that his plans are not our plans.

I want to concentrate now on verse 4. After Jesus asked them to trust that there is a place for them in his plan, he expects the disciples to know the way. The verse 4 goes like that: **'You know the way to the place where I am going.'** But on verse 5 you can feel the panic in Thomas's voice, **"Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"** That was quite embarrassing, someone could say. After all that time with Jesus and they could not understand God's or Jesus's plans?! Well! It's not that simple, is it? I have been a Christian my whole life and I still find myself outside God's plans and Jesus' ways just because my big EGO. I still think that I can do things based on my own experience and knowledge.

In verse 6 **Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.** Jesus is saying that he is 'the way'. There is a great deal to consider in this short statement and the three words Jesus is using: way, truth and life. Let's stick with THE WAY for today's reflection.

First, it's important to understand that the way here is not a route to a destination. Rather is a set of disciplines which we should practice faithfully in our daily living. Jesus' way is to live life in the centre of God's plans not in our own plans. The way of Christ is the work we do to grow in faith and intimacy with God, to become what God has created us to be. The way is not about doing things as way to go to

heaven, but it is a process. A process of transformation. It is to become by conversion. And then doing become just the bearing of fruits, a sign and proclamation of the way of Christ. You see, we are called to follow Christ as a way of life. He never called us to worship him as a transaction to get to heaven. But for me, sometimes, hearing our conversations, it sounds like that we prefer more and more the one-hour worship on Sunday than the hard work to have Christ's way as our way of life.

But how does it look like to truly Receive Christ as the way of life?

“1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. 5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:”

Philippians 2:1 – 5. The harmony here comes not from our own set of minds or because we agree in traditions and costumes but because Christ's way had become our way of life until we have the same mindset as Christ.

This year, together with your membership card you will receive '**A Methodist Way of Life**' card. It will introduce a movement that began in Wesley's time, a **Methodist rule of life**. It is not about bringing old traditions back but a way to incarnate Christ in modern times through intentional spirituality. **A Methodist Way of Life** is a commitment, an intentional discipline, and an accountable discipleship.

We will be challenged to first assume a commitment in the 4 areas of our (Methodist church) calling and priorities:

1. Prayer and Worship
2. Learning and caring
3. Service
4. Evangelism.

A Methodist Way of Life Card will encourage us to grow together. Making time to, together (in small groups or in pairs) and regularly, support each other, to discuss and reflect the difficulties to fulfil our promises, to find new and relevant ways to incarnate Christ in our living. It is a tool and a method to help us to intentionally put into practice Christ's ways in all areas of our lives and be transformed by this practice.

Here is the link to the card for your contemplation:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/16918/mwol-commitment-card-220420.pdf>

The first commitment in the ***Methodist Way of Life Card*** is: 'We will pray daily'. For many people living in our modern rhythm of life, this is not an easy promise to fulfil. So, the card brings two questions for reflection and to help us to support each other on our prayer journey.

I picked this example because this is the most essential element for a Christian way of life, and it seems, for most people, the hardest discipline to keep. So, the question for me is how to incarnate prayer in our living.

I have a story to share with you that may help us to reflect on how to create a rhythm of prayer incorporated in our modern lives. This is a story of a conversation between a priest and a rabbi about God's name in the Bible. **First** you need to know that in the old Hebrew language there were only consonants, not vowels. For example, God's name writes like this 'YHWH'. And the **second** thing you need to know is that they were forbidden to say God's name out loud. Back to the story, the priest asked the rabbi: how do you pronounce God's name? Is it Jave? Jehovah? Yahweh? And when you say God's name is a kind of verb that express at the same time past, present and future (that was, is and will continue to be), what does that mean? The Rabbi answered: it is not just a verb or action; it is like living and it sounds like life. It is like a breath. You breathe in, and you breathe out. You breathe in 'YAH' and you breathe out 'WH'. God's name is life itself. To live we need to say it in every breathe. God's name is the first and the last thing you express. It is the thing you do if you are alive and to keep you alive. And it is the most genuine prayer.

The way we say God's name express what our hearts are going through. If you are anxious, there is one rhythm of breath, if you are scared or in love, there's another rhythm. Or if you are angry or suffering, it's a different rhythm. And that is true prayer. To say the name of God with no words but the rhythm of your heart, your breathing.

In other words, the Rabbi was saying that we do not say the name of God. We breathe it in and out. And every time we change our circumstances, going through different emotions, feeling, troubles or celebrations we change the way we express God's name. There is no way to hide behind words. It is an expression of the heart. That is why Jesus said that our prayers should not have many words. So, worship is not only what we do on the Sunday morning, but it is a way of life.

So, let us try it in a conscious way, let us pray: Breathe In, breathe out. Breathe In, breathe out. Breathe In, breathe out.

'YAH - WH' 'YAH - WH' 'YAH - WH' 'YAH - WH'
Amen.

- **Hymn: I should like to speak to you (Singing the Faith: 522)**

- **Prayer of intercession**

In our prayers today let's explore our hearts, our feelings.

How was your week?

How are you now?

What emotions are you feeling?

If you have a request for prayer, bring it to mind.

Think about it.

Now. How do you feel about it?

Now. Hold on to that emotion.

Now breathe it to God.

Breathe in and breathe out.

Call God's name using your breath.

'YAH - WH' 'YAH - WH' 'YAH - WH' 'YAH - WH'

Now, just using God's name express, in prayer, without word, your feelings and emotion. Your afflictions or happiness.

'YAH - WH' 'YAH - WH' 'YAH - WH' 'YAH - WH'

Let your feeling shape your breathing.

'YAH - WH' 'YAH - WH' 'YAH - WH' 'YAH - WH'

'YAH - WH' 'YAH - WH' 'YAH - WH' 'YAH - WH'

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 and the power,

and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

- **Blessing**

May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

be with you now and forever more.

Amen.