

## Morning Praise Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2021



### Opening prayer

Holy Father, give us a spirit of contentment and peace, that we may enjoy who we are and what we have. Help us to not only appreciate what you have given us, but to be gracious and generous to others. May the world's goods be neither hoarded or squandered but used for the benefit of all; through Jesus Christ our Lord who with you and the Holy Spirit are one God, for ever. Amen

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and repent. Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin. Renew a right spirit within us and restore us to the joy of your salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

*cf Psalm 51*

### Absolution

May the Father of all mercies cleanse *us* from *our* sins, and restore *us* in his image to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### Reading: Psalm 1

### Reading: Mark 9: 30 - 37

### Talk : Cathy

If you could choose what animal you wanted to be, what would you choose?

Something fun like a dog, independent like a cat, unique as a unicorn, free as a bird or powerful as a lion?.....I can guarantee no one would choose to be a snail!

Yet snails are vital for the food chain they are key for breaking down vegetation and provide good food for many larger predators, it may not be great in terms of looks or image, but snails serve their purpose brilliantly.

As Mark takes us through the disciples gradual understanding of God's purposes for His people, rather than trying to grapple with Jesus' teaching we sadly find them having a bit of a spat about who's the greatest! The twelve disciples are going for a power struggle. V 33- 34 conjure up a wonderful picture of the disciples looking ashamed as they realise that Jesus really did hear them arguing! *'but they kept quiet because they had argued about who was the greatest.'* I'm sure they did!

They must have hoped that Jesus hadn't heard them as they knew that discussing who had the most status was not the purpose Jesus had in mind. Jesus didn't really care if important people disapproved of him. He wasn't out to impress anyone, to work his way to the top, he was there to get on with the job of loving people and getting people ready for the kingdom of God, to fulfil His purpose that God had sent Him to do.

What Jesus did really care about in his friends, was the attitude of heart which is warm and accepting, that trusts and is simplistic yet not simple, that can see the funny side of a situation and be over awed at the beauty of a butterfly, is open to give love generously and to be loved, that doesn't want to grab the limelight....the type of heart and response so typical in a child.

A 4 year old was at the paediatricians for a check up, as the Doctor looked into her ears he asked 'do you think I'll find Big Bird in here?' She stayed silent. Next the Doctor looked in her throat and said 'so you

think I'll find the cookie monster down there?' Again she was silent. Then the Doctor put a stethoscope to her heart and asked 'do you think I'll hear Barney in here?' 'Oh no!' Said the little girl. 'Jesus is in my heart, Barney is on my pants.'

Whilst the literal way children interpret life is often naive, Jesus was looking for the response which completely trusts and loves, doesn't seek for position and power, the heart that trusts their father to catch them every time they jump, the heart which will accept people as they are.

Paul writes in Philippians 2: 1- 2

*'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, <sup>2</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.'*

Over the last twelve years and a half we have discovered together what it is to love and to serve each other and to bring God's hope and love out into the wider community. Yes, at times it has been hard, there have been bumpy patches, but if you remember my cross, it shows how when we all come together before the cross of Jesus, we may have rough or even sharp edges, but in Jesus, he brings us together and make us into something beautiful.

At the cross we will find no selfish ambition, no bitterness or squabbling, rather at the cross we find our purpose as individuals and as a church, the body of Christ, seeking His glory.

Jesus led by loving and serving, as Paul continues in that passage in Philippians 2, *'he made himself as nothing and he humbled himself, even to death on the cross.'*

The child Jesus took and stood amongst them represented, the vulnerability of the lowest status. ...and let's not overlook the clear warning about **not** welcoming those who are vulnerable and weak, those who are on the edge. We must always welcome them.

Tom Wright says....*We are to gather up our ambitions of wealth, power, influence which affect our attitudes to others and scatter them to the wind, leaving us unburdened and free so we can simply serve in humility and love as Jesus loved.'*

What will God's purposes be for you and for us, in the weeks and years ahead? Our places of worship will now be different but in many ways, our purposes are the same...*'to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul and to love your neighbour as yourself'*

We will discover the details of those purposes through prayer, through His Word, through worship, through serving, through looking to Jesus, through encouraging each other.

This is an opportunity to really pull together, to seek God's way forward, to trust in His unfailing provision.

It has been observed in different parishes, that often people drift away from church during an interregnum, just at a time when all are so vital to ensuring the church continues to thrive.

Corrie ten Boon reflecting on her experiences in Belson Concentration Camp said....*when a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer.'*

Each one of us, wherever God takes us, has a purpose to fulfil and are needed to be part of the church. While we are called individually to follow Jesus, our discipleship is not an individual affair. Jesus called his disciples into community where we serve one another, where we encourage one another. Are you praying daily for the church wardens and PCC members with their additional responsibilities? This church needs to not just look inwards at all that needs to be done, but outwards too, existing to serve the world around, a signpost to the good news of Jesus.

Part of these purposes will be to reach out to the next generations, to the children and their families, how will we do that? We must not ignore Jesus call to include the children.

Jesus knew His purpose was **to be** a servant, not like a servant, to BE a servant of others. This kind of service is unlikely to be noticed, but service and love are very much the unseen part of a greater Kingdom purpose.

My prayer for you all is that in the weeks and months ahead you will discover so much more of God's generous and life giving provision and His purposes for you each as individuals and collectively as a church.

I'd like to finish with a blessing from Celtic prayer:

*May you always be a strong arm to the weak;*

*May you always be a comfort to the crying;*

*A smile to the lonely,*

*A blessing to the grieving*

*And may you always be a haven for the anxious.*

*May your life be full of Jesus and His love;*

*May you be God driven by the Father and the Spirit*

*And may you be His hands and smile*

*And be His arms of comfort.*

*And may you always be His blessing to the world. Amen*

### **Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

### **Prayers led by Ruth A**

Lord Jesus Christ, you have said that you are the Way the Truth and the Life. Suffer us not to stray from you, who are the Way, nor to distrust you, who are the Truth, not to rest in anything other than you, who are the Life, Amen. (*Desiderius Erasmus*)

The Martha and Mary prayer. Lord, there are those who are good leaders, those with gifts to speak and make decisions; those who are good listeners, and those who quietly care; those whose work is little noticed, but without which our church would be the poorer. Take all our gifts, Lord, and use them for your glory. We pray for Cathy and Steve as they start their next stage of their journey, we thank you for the blessing of having Cathy for so many years.

Let us Pray - O God, light of the minds that know you, life of the souls that love you, and strength of the hearts that seek you - bless the words of our lips and the meditations of our hearts. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen

Lord Jesus, you calmed the raging storm and tamed the surging sea—calm the tempest of indecision and cure the seasickness within our souls. Forgive our faint-heartedness. Grant us not just the courage to do the right thing, but also the wisdom to figure out just what that right thing is. Reassure us, Lord, that even if the right course of action hurts us in the short run, that you will ultimately reward our faithfulness and keep us safe.

Thank You Lord

Thank you Lord that I can see ..... so many are blind.

Thank you Lord that I can hear ..... so many are deaf.

Thank you Lord that I can walk ..... so many are crippled.

Thank you Lord that I have food ..... so many are starving.

Thank you Lord that I have shelter ..... so many are homeless.

Thank you Lord for the touch of a friendly hand ..... so many are lonely.

Thank you Lord for the Cross you share with me and for all your blessings ..... so many deserve them better. Help me Lord always to be mindful. Amen

Loving God, we praise you for welcoming and accepting us as your beloved children. We know that you are in the business of changing hearts and lives through the witness of believers and the urging of your Spirit and we thank you for it. Make us fitting witnesses and grant us the grace to be people who reach out as every opportunity comes to us - to be instruments of your healing and transforming power. We think, O Lord, not only of ourselves, not only of our families, but we think of the world and those in it who need wholeness, who need peace, who need a reason to have hope..... Lord, hear our prayer

God, the source of all health: So fill our hearts with faith in your love, that with calm expectancy We may make room for your power to possess me, and gracefully accept your healing; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We pray that the Church may hold true to the teaching of Jesus, without being persuaded that worldly values of status and ambition should overcome our desire to serve Christ. We pray for a right spirit of humility, that we might recognize our calling to servant hood. Amen

We pray that all who have wearily struggled to death may know the joy of burdens laid down and the joy of the new and lasting live which transforms them into your likeness. Amen

**The Lord's Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen***

### **Blessing**

Go with confidence into the days ahead, trusting in God's unfailing love and faithfulness.

God will not abandon you, for you are the work of His hands- His own creation- and His love endures forever.

So go in joy to love and serve the Lord!

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and remain with you always.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**