

FAREHAM METHODIST CHURCH
WORSHIP@HOME ON ZOOM
28 FEBRUARY 2021

CALL TO WORSHIP

Worship is the doorstep of heaven where the children speak to their Father,
the poor sit at table with their Saviour and the weak are empowered by God's Spirit.
This is where love and mercy meet, love and obedience hold hands,
and where love bids us welcome: for this is the doorstep of heaven.

**Loving God,
let it be this and more for us today,
for Jesus' sake. Amen.**

Though we are scattered, we come together to meet with God.
Let us recognize his presence with us.

Silence is kept.

We meet in the presence of God
**who knows our needs,
hears our cries,
feels our pain,
and heals our wounds.**

HYMN SF 137: *New Every Morning is the Love*

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 New every morning is the love
our wakening and uprising prove ;
through sleep and darkness safely brought,
restored to life, and power, and thought. | 4 The trivial round, the common task
Would furnish all we ought to ask,
Room to deny ourselves a road
To bring us daily nearer God |
| 2 New mercies, each returning day
hover around us while we pray ;
new perils past, new sins forgiven,
new thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven. | 5. Only, O Lord, in thy dear love
Fit us for perfect rest above ;
and help us, this and every day,
to live more nearly as we pray. |
| 3 If on our daily course our mind
be set to hallow all we find,
new treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice. | |

John Keble (1792–1866)
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PRAISE

You who fear the LORD, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;
stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

**For he did not despise or abhor
the affliction of the afflicted;
he did not hide his face from me,
but heard when I cried to him.**

From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.

The poor shall eat and be satisfied;

those who seek him shall praise the LORD.

May your hearts live for ever!

All the ends of the earth shall remember

and turn to the LORD;

and all the families of the nations

shall worship before him.

For dominion belongs to the LORD,

and he rules over the nations.

To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;

before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,

and I shall live for him.

Posterity will serve him;

future generations will be told about the Lord,

and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,

saying that he has done it.

Psalm 22:23-31

CONFESSION

Lord, we remember the depth of your love for us,

and we repent of our half-hearted discipleship.

We have been called to deny ourselves:

forgive us for putting self-interest

before the interests of your kingdom;

forgive us that Christ's Lordship in our hearts

has been challenged by our ambition, our appetites,

our desires, and our needs;

forgive us for the times when self-interest

hindered our care for others.

Lord, we have been called to carry a cross:

forgive us for complaining when it has weighed heavily upon us;

forgive us that, having received so much,

we have sacrificed so little;

forgive us for the limits we have set to Christian love;

forgive us that we have settled for mediocrity,

resisting the fire and passion of Christ's love upon the cross. Amen.

The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance,

that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

To all who confess their sins and resolve to lead a new life, he says:

Your sins are forgiven,

and he also says:

Follow me.

To the King of the ages,

immortal, invisible, the only God,

be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen.

SONG SF 471: *Lord I Come To You*

1 Lord, I come to you,
let my heart be changed, renewed,
flowing from the grace
that I found in you.
And Lord, I've come to know
the weaknesses I see in me
will be stripped away
by the power of your love.

2 Lord, unveil my eyes,
let me see you face to face,
the knowledge of your love
as you live in me.
Lord, renew my mind,
as your will unfolds in my life
in living every day
by the power of your love.

*Hold me close,
let your love surround me ;
bring me near, draw me to your side.
And as I wait,
I'll rise up like the eagle,
and I will soar with you,
your Spirit leads me on
in the power of your love.*

Geoff Bullock (b. 1956)
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ADORATION

Lord Jesus Christ
you have walked where we walk
and now you help us in our weakness:
blessed be your name.

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have been tempted as we have
and now you come to help us in our danger:
blessed be your name.

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have suffered for us
and now you help us when we reach our wit's end:
blessed be your name.

Lord Jesus Christ,
you were deserted and betrayed,
and now you are with us when all others have gone:
blessed be your name.

Lord Jesus Christ, companion Christ, friend and saviour,
**we adore you,
we love you,
we need you:
help us to follow. Amen.**

SONG SF 41: *Blessed be your Name*

1 Blessed be your name
in the land that is plentiful,
where your streams of abundance flow,
blessed be your name.
And blessed be your name
when I'm found in the desert place,
though I walk through the wilderness,
blessed be your name.
Every blessing you pour out
I'll turn back to praise.
And when the darkness closes in, Lord,
still I will say :
*Blessed be the name of the Lord,
blessed be your name.
Blessed be the name of the Lord,
blessed be your glorious name.*

2 Blessed be your name
when the sun's shining down on me,
when the world's 'all as it should be,'
blessed be your name.
And blessed be your name
on the road marked with suffering,
though there's pain in the offering,
blessed be your name.
Every blessing you pour out
I'll turn back to praise.
And when the darkness closes in, Lord,
still I will say :
Blessed be the name of the Lord ...

You give and take away,
you give and take away.
My heart will choose to say,
'Lord, blessed be your name.'
Blessed be the name of the Lord ...

Matt Redman (b. 1974) and Beth Redman

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READING: Mark 8:31-38

Then Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

SERMON

A quick recap on the history of God's people from Abraham up to the point of that gospel reading. I promise, very quick – probably too quick but it helps us understand what this is all about.

Abraham, the human 'father of many nations,' lived in a pagan world of many gods but he was open to the One Creator and came into a covenant relationship with Yahweh – the Lord. Abraham's descendants were chosen to be a people through whom all the world would be blessed. Later the guiding principles of the Law were given through Moses. By the time Jesus came on the scene, Judaism was well established and minutely organised. But God had been privatised and the bit about the world side-lined. There must have been many who did maintain that loving relationship with God, but it seems the powerful hierarchy were more interested in administering the Law, which had tended to smother relationship.

Perhaps when Jesus started his ministry, he hoped that the religious authorities – the theologians – might recognise him. But he quickly realised that this was not going to happen. They already had their pattern for the Messiah they expected. Although implicit in some prophetic writings, particularly those relating to Isaiah's Suffering Servant, Jesus's revolutionary understanding of power was in direct opposition to the human understanding of power.

That's the central point today: the Power of Love versus the love of power.

Just before today's passage Peter has recognised Jesus as Messiah. But, similarly to the theologians, Peter has his own understanding of what being Messiah involved. And it didn't include getting crucified.

We read Jesus's reaction to Peter's rebuke. This echoes the temptations which were all about human ideas of power, and which he had rejected, choosing instead to make Love work.

You don't need to have heard or read much Church history to come to the conclusion that the Church has tended more towards Peter's ideas of power than those of Jesus. But there have always been people who have understood, often at great cost, and got it right.

This gospel reading is painful because it points out that following Jesus isn't easy and Jesus never said it would be – rather the contrary. Jesus is simply and devastatingly honest: God's Kingdom of Love comes at a terrible cost. Because we are familiar with it, we often gloss over the barbarous brutality of that ghastly image of carrying your cross.

What Jesus saw clearly was the sad fact that it was not the pagan power of Rome but the religious elite – the good Church people of Jesus's day – who manipulated a foreign death sentence to get rid of the one person who had demonstrated how their God wanted his chosen people to live. The original 'relationship' of Covenant Love and trust had got lost in a power-driven legalism.

The love of power or the Power of Love?

The Church confesses faith as readily as Peter did but we are also the heirs of his misunderstanding. His faith was rightly placed in Jesus, who was and is the true Rock, the Cornerstone on which the Kingdom is built. 'Christ is made the sure foundation.' We shuffle along, wanting to do things the Jesus way but we still cling to our trust in the world's accepted pathways to power.

There are innumerable examples of people who have risked the Jesus way, often involving great suffering. One which reached the world stage was the 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' in South Africa. When Nelson Mandela emerged from 27 years in prison many expected a blood bath. Instead, with Bishop Desmond Tutu, a new thing happened. Violent enemies were facing each other, saying sorry for atrocities, and offering forgiveness; and things were able to move forward for a little while. It can be done, but Jesus's stark message is still that it is costly.

The pandemic has thrust the Church out of buildings and out of comfort zones. New ways have emerged. We are out in the marketplace – the digital marketplace – and environments where we are neither comfortable nor familiar with. We are seen alongside and compared with power-mongers, fake news and commerce.

But the message is the same: the Kingdom for which we are made is not built on the love of power but on the Power of Love.

Stories of love in action emerge often from non-Christian sources. The Spirit works where there are those who allow and enable the work of the Kingdom of Love. There are Scribes and Pharisees alive and well in the Church today who are far more interested in ticking boxes than in risking the Jesus way. There are many who have been badly hurt by Church people.

God works through people who are willing to let love in. Whether or not they are signed-up Christians doesn't seem to bother God. Perhaps there will be some surprises in heaven as new arrivals exclaim, 'Was it you all the time and I didn't realise?'

In the meantime, thank God for the Church, Christ's body on earth; and thank God that, in spite of all our mistakes, the world belongs to God and our job as his family is to bear the family likeness.

*You take the stuff of chaos, fear and dread
And make a path that we must bravely tread
And follow where your gracious footsteps lead
To share the work to meet each other's need.*

HYMN: *The World We Thought We Knew*

The world we thought we knew is changing fast
And longingly we cling to what is past –
That settled life which made no great demand.
A foretaste of the hoped for Promised Land.

The challenge of catastrophe and change
Will lead us well beyond our former range
Exposing us to things we do not know
Demanding all the love that we can show.

But as for you, dynamic, pilgrim God
You do not linger on the path well-trod.
But ever lead your pilgrim people on
To risk an unknown future with your Son.

You take the stuff of chaos, fear and dread
And make a path that we must bravely tread
To follow where your gracious footsteps lead
And share your work to meet each other's need.

Rosemary Wakelin
Tune Woodlands (Tell out my soul) SF 18

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

An opportunity to pray for all that is on our hearts and minds: family, friends, neighbours and communities; we pray for those in positions of power influence and authority with difficult decisions to make that have far reaching consequences; we pray for those we depend on who work often unnoticed and under-appreciated.

Heavenly Father, we bring before you the divisions in your world: the hatreds and prejudice's which divide nations against nation, class against class and race against race. Give to all leaders and their advisers the courage to be honest, the will to be just, the greatness to be humble and the openness to learn.

Merciful God, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for your church in this season of Lent. By our disciplines make us more ready to take up our cross, to trust you and follow in your steps of service to one another and our neighbours.

Merciful God, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, as we remember Jesus' suffering on the cross, give us compassion for those who suffer today. Give comfort and healing to those who are ill, peace to the anxious, and reassurance to those who are afraid. Give us the will and the wisdom to relieve their need and heal their pain that all may know your love for us. Merciful God, **hear our prayer.**

The Lord's Prayer

HYMN SF 563: *O Jesus I Have Promised*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=trs17OEHe7E>

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 O Jesus, I have promised
 to serve thee to the end ;
 be thou for ever near me,
 my master and my friend ;
 I shall not fear the battle
 if thou art by my side,
 nor wander from the pathway
 if thou wilt be my guide.</p> <p>2 O Jesus, thou hast promised
 to all who follow thee,
 that where thou art in glory
 there shall thy servant be;
 and, Jesus, I have promised</p> | <p>to serve thee to the end ;
O give me grace to follow
my master and my friend.</p> <p>3 O let me see thy footmarks
 and in them plant mine own
 my hope to follow duly,
 is in thy strength alone;
 O guide me, call me, draw me,
 uphold me to the end;
 and then in heaven receive me,
 My savour and my friend.</p> |
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John Ernest Bode (1816–1874) Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 563

CLOSING PRAYER AND BLESSING

**In darkness and in light,
in trouble and in joy,
help us, heavenly Father,
to trust your love,
to serve your purpose,
and to praise your name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

God give us grace to grow in holiness, to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him; and the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among us and remain with us and those we love and all for whom we pray today and always. **Amen.**

We go into the world
**to walk in God's light,
to rejoice in God's love
and to reflect God's glory.**