

**February 13<sup>th</sup> 2022**  
**A service of worship for use at home**  
**Prepared by Rev David Speed**

**Nottingham North East  
Methodist Circuit**

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Charity number 1134226



**Call to Worship** –

I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart;  
I will tell of all your wonders

**Hymn** - Singing the Faith 41 Blessed be your name –

Blessed Be Your Name  
In the land that is plentiful  
Where Your streams of abundance flow  
Blessed be Your name

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  
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

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

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  
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, oh

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  
Blessed be Your name  
Blessed be the name of the Lord  
Blessed be Your glorious name

*Matt Redman and Beth Redman*

**Prayer of Adoration,**

Let us pray,  
Lord, we praise you because of who you are.  
You are the God of graciousness, who wants us to have good things,  
who wants us to know living at its best, and you show us how to do this.  
You show us beauty,  
and yet in yourself you show us that the greater beauty is the beauty of the soul.  
We praise you.  
You would think that love for you would make it easy to follow you but there is a flaw in our nature  
that seems to stop us.

## Prayer of Confession

We say our own prayer of confession in the words of Singing the Faith hymn number 419, Almighty God, we come to make confession –

1. Almighty God, we come to make confession for we have sinned in thought and word and deed.

We now repent in honesty and sorrow; forgive us, Lord, and meet us in our need.

2. Forgiving God, I come to make confession of all the harm and hurt that I have done; of bitter words and many selfish actions, forgive me, Lord, and make me like your Son.

3. Forgiving God, I come to make confession of all that I have failed to do this day; of help withheld, concern and love restricted, forgive me, Lord, and lead me in your way.

4 Redeeming God, we come to seek forgiveness, for Jesus Christ has died to set us free. Forgive the past and fill us with your Spirit that we may live to serve you joyfully.

*Christopher J. Ellis*

**Readings** The readings show us how to live our best lives.

### Luke 6:17-26

He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by impure spirits were cured, and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

Looking at his disciples, he said:

“Blessed are you who are poor,  
for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who hunger now,  
for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now,  
for you will laugh.

Blessed are you when people hate you,  
when they exclude you and insult you  
and reject your name as evil,  
because of the Son of Man.

“Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

“But woe to you who are rich,  
for you have already received your comfort.  
Woe to you who are well fed now,  
for you will go hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now,  
for you will mourn and weep.

Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you,  
for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

## Psalm 1

Blessed is the one  
who does not walk in step with the wicked  
or stand in the way that sinners take  
or sit in the company of mockers,  
but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,  
and who meditates on his law day and night.  
That person is like a tree planted by streams of  
water,  
which yields its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither—  
whatever they do prospers.

Not so the wicked!  
They are like chaff  
that the wind blows away.  
Therefore the wicked will not stand in the  
judgment,  
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.  
For the LORD watches over the way of the  
righteous,  
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

## Sermon – Psalm 1

Anne, my wife, loves the Psalms. Her love of the Psalms is one reason why I chose this reading from Psalm 1 to preach on. So, if you like this address, tell me. If you don't you can always blame her. Why is this Psalm 1, the first Psalm? I don't think it was because it was the first one written. It was placed as the first Psalm because it set the tone for every other Psalm. The tone that was set was to say you live best when you live God's way. 'Blessed is the man whose delight by day and night is the law of God Almighty'. I don't think it meant stuffily observing all sorts of rules and regulations but wanting to please God and make Him happy.

What does it mean to delight in God's law? To make God happy, to do what God wants, to love life, and to love people. So, how do we make God happy?

God's law tells us what God wants and we want to do the things that make God happy.

We need the person whose delight is the law of God Almighty.

I, like all Ministers, have had to take a number of funerals and at a number of them the family would say, usually, of their mother, "She was happy when the family were happy".

I know that my parents always tried to do the things that made each other happy.

Blessed is the person who is happy when she or he makes God happy. If that's what you try and do in a marriage, partnership and family, shouldn't we also be that way with God?

I know the phrase meditating on God's Law means murmuring it out loud as religious Jews would do to this day at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. I know it says in the book of Joshua, "You shall meditate on it (God's Law) day and night that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it", but in our time I think we could take it to mean 'think about what would make God happy'.

If we follow God out of love then we won't feel we have to out of duty. If we do it out of love, we shall be blessed, because we're always happier when we're thinking of another rather than thinking of ourselves. We're always happier doing something out of love, because we're glad to do it, rather than because we feel we ought to do it. Blessed is the woman or man who wants to make God happy.

Blessed is the person who wants to follow God's Ways.

Imagine a game without rules. There are some that are almost without rules. It's almost Shrove Tuesday, and at Ashbourne there is the Shrove Tuesday Football Match. At Ashbourne, there are two teams, the Uppards and the Downards. Uppards try to score a goal at one end and the Downards at the other. You can forage, wrestle the ball, handle or do virtually anything that would normally give

you an instant red card at a normal football match. Mind you, even the Ashbourne game has rules. Murder and manslaughter are not permitted. Unnecessary violence is frowned upon, and the ball cannot be carried in a coat or bag, or vehicle. Other than that and a bar on playing after 10 p.m. and in Churches and cemeteries, all is possible.

But if you played a game without rules, you'd have no game to play.

That's exactly the situation we're sometimes in. Matthew Parris, an atheist, says that with the decline of Churchgoing, people have become unhappier. They have no framework of values for their lives. Nothing seems to satisfy. It seems to ring true. Even playing a game needs rules.

Someone talked about this long before Matthew Parris, "He said, Each man does what is right in his own eyes". What's more each man writes his own Bible, and leaves God out, which is a bit discourteous.

So many will not take responsibility for their own actions. Some write their own Bible and say, "Someone else is responsible, not me". We live in a blame culture where everyone covers themselves in case they get sued. Has it led to a happier society? It's like playing a game with no rules.

We need a framework in which to live our lives. We need to hold our hands up, and say, "I made a mistake". "I was wrong". To say, "It was the other guy". Or "I wasn't really wrong", Or everyone does it" is to spend your life trying to justify yourself.

Do we not feel more calm on the inside when we admit that we are wrong? Someone said, "What does it mean to say that you are wrong but that you are wiser today than you were yesterday?"

The one who does this is the one who is secure. Easier just to hold your hand up. I was wrong. I'm going to put it right.

Or, as the writer puts it, someone who follows God's wishes, and God's laws are God's wishes, is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season.

This kind of person makes the best contribution to society. She or he may get drained, but they come to God for replenishment.

Do you remember the song they sang in the 1960s, in the protest marches, "We shall not be moved? Just like a tree that's standing by the riverside, we shall not be moved".

I didn't know they got it from this Psalm.

The reliable person, the secure person, the person who makes the best contribution to society is the person who seeks God's help in following God's framework. She or he does it because they love God and know God's ways are best. We do so because we are glad to do so, happier when we live in a framework, and happiest when we live in God's framework.

How do we make God happy? By doing the things that make Him happy, wanting to follow His ways, and loving the life that God gave us. Love the love that God gave us. See the world as God's world, too, and see it as original blessing as well as original sin. Listen to the words, God so loved the world as well the rest of the Bible verse. A lady in her eighties used to love dancing. In Malta she suggested going on a catamaran. A bit adventurous and risky. She had a love of life.

God gave us a life to enjoy so long as we don't stop someone else's enjoyment. The poet, Euros Bowen, wrote, "To curse life is to err". The writer of one of the Psalms wrote, "The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands". You find God's playfulness in nature.

All this faith business isn't about talking to God and about God all the time, not that we do. Don't you think even God would get fed up with that? Maybe that's one reason why God has given us so many

things to enjoy. I'm here in dance, nature, and music, He may be saying. Love the life that I gave you and see me in it. How do we make God happy? By loving the life that God have us.

How do we make God happy? By loving people, as well as life. "People are my scenery" said a landlady. It means showing people the kindness of God before the truth of God. It means showing people the truth of God only out of love for them. Through it all it means making time for God for He appreciates our company. When others do the dirty on us and there's that great pressure to get back on them, it means remembering that we belong to Jesus and have chosen His way and will not be deflected from it. It means seeing Jesus in another person. It means taking time for God who alone can help us to be this way. We like to be with such people. They make God attractive. They give us the sense that they're living their best lives. We can be those people when we ask for God's help. When we are those people, we almost do God's wishes naturally. Those who do this will find that they are in touch with themselves, in touch with life, in touch with God and blessed because they are living their best lives.

Will you be that person, Will I?

In such a time as this when each justifies himself, we need the person who seeks God's framework. We need to be those who want to make God happy, want to do as He would want us, that way ourselves, and love the life and the people He gave us to love, for our happiness. As Captain Jean-Luc Picard would say in "Star Trek", "Make it so", with God's help. AMEN.

**Hymn** - Singing the Faith 548 Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine,

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine;  
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,  
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

*This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Saviour all the day long.  
This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Saviour all the day long.*

2. Perfect submission, perfect delight,  
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;  
Angels descending, bring from above  
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

*This is my story...*

3. Perfect submission, all is at rest,  
I in my Saviour am happy and blest;  
Watching and waiting, looking above,  
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

*This is my story ...*

### **Prayers of Intercession and Lord's Prayer**

Let us pray,

We thank you for being concerned for the smallest to the greatest person, and that you make no distinction between them.

We thank you for motivating people of love to do something about people's sorrow, and the world as we have it.

We represent them and our world as we come to you in confidence.

We pray for the family of the five-year-old Moroccan boy so tragically killed in the well. We pray for them in their tears.

We pray for the continuing tension between Russia and Ukraine, and other way to be found of addressing the fears that lead to confrontation.

We pray for the city of Ottawa, Canada, in the middle of lorry drivers protest against Covid restrictions.

We pray in our own land for all, and we know that that means all of us, who to a lesser or greater degree worry about being able to pay the increased energy costs, especially those who feel the dilemma between heating or eating.

We pray for any new crises and needs.

We pray for those still worried about opening up their lives in face of Covid and ask you to show them what is wise for them.

We pray for those whom we love.

We pray for ourselves.

From this faith may we never flee, that You do good we cannot see.

*Amen*

I invite you to say the **Lord's Prayer**.

**Hymn** - Singing the Faith 498 God of all power and truth and grace

1 GOD of all power, and truth, and grace,  
Which shall from age to age endure,  
Whose word, when heaven and earth shall  
pass,  
Remains and stands for ever sure;

2 That I your mercy may proclaim,  
That all your world your truth may see,  
Hallow your great and glorious name,  
And perfect holiness in me.

3 Your sanctifying Spirit pour,  
To quench my thirst, and make me clean;  
Now, Father, let the gracious shower  
Descend, and make me pure from sin.

4 Give me a new, a perfect heart,  
Free from all doubt and fear, at last  
The mind which was in Christ impart,  
And let my spirit hold you fast.

5 O that I now, from sin released,  
Your word may to the utmost prove,  
Enter into the promised rest,  
The Canaan of your perfect love!

*Charles Wesley*

### **Blessing**

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*