



# The Methodist Church

Nottingham North East Circuit - Sunday 22 August 2021

This short act of worship has been prepared for you by Deacon Helen Snowball to use at home. If you are well enough, why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you

## Opening Psalm 25:1-10

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

2 O my God, in you I trust;

do not let me be put to shame;

do not let my enemies exult over me.

3 Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;

let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

4 Make me to know your ways, O Lord;

teach me your paths.

5 Lead me in your truth, and teach me,

for you are the God of my salvation;

for you I wait all day long.

6 Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love,

for they have been from of old.

7 Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;

according to your steadfast love remember me,  
for your goodness' sake, O Lord!

8 Good and upright is the Lord;

therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

9 He leads the humble in what is right,

and teaches the humble his way.

10 All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness,

for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

## Hymn - StF 88 Praise to the Lord

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 He 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 winds of grace o'er thee.

Praise to the Lord, oh, 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.

Translated by Catherine Winksworth (1827-1878 and Rupert E Davies (1909-1994)

## Let's pray

Eternal God,

You are the source of all life,

The fount of all wisdom, the wellspring of all grace.

Your days are without end,

your loving mercies without number,

and I depend on you and remember your goodness to me and to those who have gone before.

Your story has been told in every generation,

the Lord Jesus Christ lived among us,

full of grace and truth,

revealing your tender mercy,

he healed the sick,

comforted the broken and lost,

in humility he washed the feet of his disciples,

calling us to follow his example as one who serves.

You are my God,

ahead of me,

leading me,

guiding me and calling me,

you are the Lord God, the all-wise, the all-

compassionate, and I lift my heart in worship,

today and for ever.

Amen.

Methodist Diaconal Order Daily Prayer.

## Confession

For the times when we have forgotten you Lord, we are sorry.

For the times when we have not acted as you would wish, we are sorry.

For when we have neglected someone, when we have been selfish or greedy, or inconsiderate, we are sorry. Lord God in your mercy, forgive us.

Amen

## We have two readings today, the first is from Isaiah 61:1-6

61 The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,  
because the Lord has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;  
2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.  
4 They shall build up the ancient ruins,  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.

5 Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks,  
foreigners shall till your land and dress your vines;  
6 but you shall be called priests of the Lord,  
you shall be named ministers of our God;  
you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations,  
and in their riches you shall glory.

## Today's second Bible reading: - John 13:1-18

13 Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2 The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, 4 got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. 5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." 8 Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." 9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." 11 For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason, he said, "Not all of you are clean."

12 After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. 14 So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. 16 Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. 17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. 18 I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But it is to fulfil the scripture, 'The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'

## Hymn StF 272 Servant King

From heaven you came helpless babe  
Entered our world, your glory veiled.  
Not to be served but to serve  
And give your life that we might live.

## Refrain

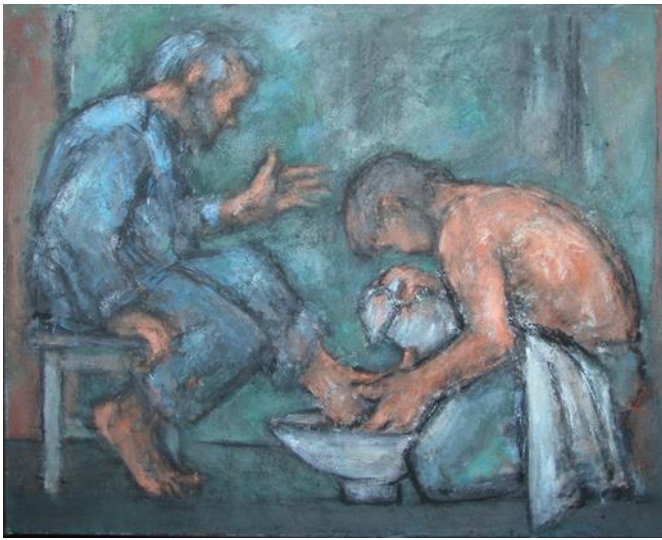
This is our God, The Servant King  
He calls us now to follow him.  
To bring our lives as a daily offering  
Of worship to The Servant King

There in the garden of tears  
My heavy load he chose to bear.  
His heart with sorrow was torn,  
'Yet not my will but yours, ' he said.  
Refrain

Come see his hands and his feet.  
The scars that speak of sacrifice  
Hands that flung stars into space  
To cruel nails surrendered  
Refrain

So let us learn how to serve,  
And in our lives enthrone him.  
Each other's need to prefer.  
For it is Christ we're serving.  
Refrain

Graham, Kendrick (b 1950).



**Ghislaine Howard - The washing of the feet  
from the Methodist Modern Art Collection © TMCP,  
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### **Reflection**

As a Deacon, these two passages are particularly important to me. They are both included in the ordination service, and are often used at Convocation and diaconal gatherings, especially the John 13 passage. These Isaiah 61 verses talk of a servant ministry, of Jesus coming to serve, not to be served, and that is what we try to do. Along with other passages in the book of Isaiah, the beginning of chapter 61 is often used to point to Jesus as Messiah, as the anointed one and as servant. These verses point to themes of release, of the year of the Lord's favour, of comfort being given to the oppressed, and it speaks of joyful tasks. These joyful tasks being bringing good news to the oppressed, binding up the broken-hearted, and releasing the prisoners. It is a little similar to the Beatitudes of Matthew 5:3-11, in that it points forward, it shows what will happen. In Matthew, Jesus says 'blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted'. In this Isaiah reading, we read that God's anointed one will comfort all who mourn, God's anointed one will not stand far above all others and rule, he will be with those who need him the most, he will be doing the comforting, he will be binding up the broken-hearted, he will be alongside. It is about helping people, blessing those who need the blessing of God the most.

In John 13, we see these promises acted out. This is sometimes called Towel and Bowl Christianity and refers to Jesus acting out for the disciples what servant ministry looks like, showing his humility and his vulnerability. There is an image just before this reflection, which shows Jesus washing Peter's feet. Now, if you didn't know that this was Jesus and Peter, the image takes on a different tone.

The kneeling man is incredibly vulnerable to attack, and the seated person could be about to hit him. He could be the master, telling his servant the water is too cold, his raised hand points to violence, to a hard slap because of displeasure. It could be an image of power and servitude, of a master and victim. Instead, we know it is Peter, seated looking down at Jesus, saying 'no master, you shall not wash my feet'. Jesus, the kneeling servant, replies that he must do this, he must demonstrate to all the disciples what servant ministry means. It is not thrones, power, war horses and prestige. Instead, it is servant ministry, vulnerability, caring for the least of society, doing the work others would turn away from. I must admit, I am not a fan of feet. Even those with manicured and seemingly perfect feet – still have horrible feet. And, as a deacon, the image of towel and bowl is often used, and it always makes me slightly uncomfortable because I doubt that I could ever do that. Perhaps this is something I need to pray about and actually get on my knees and do it for someone next Easter. We'll see. Jesus, of course, has no such squeamishness. He eats with lepers, prostitutes, the sick, the tax collector, the outcast. He meets them where they are, talks to them, prays and heals, and turns their lives around.

It's incredibly significant that when Jesus washed the disciples' feet – he washed all the disciples' feet – including Judas. He knew Judas was about to betray him, and he knew what the consequences would be, but of course he couldn't perform this act of humility and get to Judas and say, 'not you'. He showed his vulnerability and his humility, and his love for all by still washing Judas' feet. I wonder how Judas felt at that moment. I wonder if he understood the significance of Jesus' actions – he wanted a warrior king, someone to overthrow the Roman oppressors, and he had pinned his hopes on this man who was now kneeling as a servant at his feet, doing this most menial of tasks.

Jesus' servant ministry was key to his message – he had not come to rule, to be a king and have servants of his own – he was to be the servant, he would be servant to all the people who were in desperate need, those who needed love and care, and the touch of someone who would not judge or condemn. Judas didn't understand this, he expected a war and victory. Of course, there was victory over death, but Judas wouldn't have understood that. He misunderstood Jesus' whole ministry.

What about you? Have you misunderstood Jesus' ministry? Service is part of God's calling, he calls us all to care for others, to preach, teach and seek out the lonely and the vulnerable. What is your servant ministry like?

The world is full of people who need us, those who are desperate. Are you able to show what true belief in Christ looks like, even if it is uncomfortable? Are you able to show true vulnerability in Christ? Are you able to – even if metaphorically - kneel in humility and wash someone's feet?

Amen.

### **Prayers of intercession**

Pray for the world, for the countries in war, the countries in drought desperate for that which we take for granted - clean water.

Pray for all affected by the floods in Europe.

Pray for South Africa, as it deals with political and civil unrest.

Pray for free speech, but that we can express ourselves graciously, without causing hurt to others.

Pray for our government, the leaders who make big decisions that affect all of us.

Pray for the NHS, as it continues to work so hard for all of us.

Pray for our families and friends, especially those who are struggling at the moment.

Pray for those who need God the most, and those who think they need God the least.

Amen.

### **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,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

### **Our final hymn - Singing the Faith 611**

Brother, sister, let me serve you;  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,  
and companions on the road;  
we are here to help each other  
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christlight for you  
in the nighttime of your fear;  
I will hold my hand out to you,  
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;  
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;  
I will share your joy and sorrow,  
till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven,  
we shall find such harmony,  
born of all we've known together  
of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you;  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too.  
Richard Gillard (B 1953)

### **Blessing - StF 774**

The peace of the earth be to you,  
The peace of the heavens too,  
The peace of the rivers be with you,  
The peace of the oceans too.  
Deep peace falling over you,  
God's peace, God's peace growing in you.  
Guatemalan Text  
Translated by Christine Carson (b. 1965).

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