

Written Service Sunday February 2nd 2025
A service of worship for use at home
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Nottingham North East
Methodist Circuit
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Opening Psalm - Psalm 25

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
O Heart within my heart,
In you I place my trust.
Let me not feel unworthy;
Let not fear rule over me.
Yes! May all who open their hearts savour you and bless the earth.

Compel me to know your ways, O Lord.
Instruct me upon your paths.
Lead me in your truth, and teach me;
For through you will I know wholeness.
I shall reflect your light,
both day and night.

I know of your mercy Blessed One,
And of your unconditional love;
You have been with me from the beginning.
Forgive the many times I have walked away from you,
choosing to follow my own will.
I seek your guidance, once again, I yearn for your peace,
Be my companion as I open to your will.
Nan C Merrill, Psalms for Praying: An Invitation to Wholeness

Hymn - StF 471

Lord I come to you.
Let my heart be changed renewed
Flowing from the grace that
I have found in you.
And Lord, I have come to know
the weakness I see in me
will be stripped away
By the power of your love

Chorus
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 an eagle
And I will soar with you
Your spirit leads me on
By the power of your love

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 everyday
By the power of your love

Geoff Bullock

Let's pray

In the rising and the setting of the sun each day

you remind us that, within a changing and confusing world, there is a constancy we can depend upon.

Your creating breath that set this universe in motion still breathes upon it now,
dispelling darkness,
bringing dawn and hope,
to those who have eyes of faith, that see beyond the ordinary to a glorious you.

Confession

Lord Jesus,

You walked this earth as friend to the vulnerable,
defender of the weak,
bringing wholeness to lives that were broken,
healing to the sick.

As for us,
who tread these streets,
as if walking in your footsteps
but looking through our eyes -
Grant forgiveness
For those we have passed by, rather than assisted.

Remind us who we meet today that our call is not just to follow, but to have hearts that reach out where there is need, bringing your love and grace into the fragile world.

Thanksgiving

Thank you for all those who have by their example inspired us to greater things than we could have imagined, who have walked that extra mile with you and demonstrated that all things are possible for those who put their trust in you.

Bless the endeavours and all whose lives have been touched by their faithfulness.
We ask this through Jesus Christ who gave everything that we might know the true value of all things.
Amen.

Today's bible reading: Mark 1:29-39

²⁹ As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰ Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹ He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³² That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³ And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴ And he cured many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

³⁵ In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶ And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷ When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." ³⁸ He answered, "Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." ³⁹ And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Hymn StF 655

We cannot measure how you heal
or answer every sufferer's prayer,
yet we believe your grace responds
where faith and doubt unite to care.
Your hands, though bloodied on the cross,
survive to hold and heal and warn,
to carry all through death to life
and cradle children yet unborn.

The pain that will not go away,
the guilt that clings from things long past,
the fear of what the future holds,
are present as if meant to last.
But present too is love which tends
the hurt we never hoped to find,
the private agonies inside,
the memories that haunt the mind.

So some have come who need your help
and some have come to make amends,
as hands which shaped and saved the world
are present in the touch of friends.
Lord, let your Spirit meet us here
to mend the body, mind and soul,
to disentangle peace from pain,
and make your broken people whole.

John Bell, Iona Community

Reflection

In this reading, we hear, in a few short sentences, much about Jesus' life and ministry. He heals, quickly and simply, and later (verse 35) he goes off to pray, quietly, in a 'deserted place' to speak with God and not be distracted.

Peter's mother-in-law is described as being in bed, in some translations it simply says she was 'lying down'. We read that she has a fever, which in those days was considered a serious illness in its own right, and not a symptom of something else, like today. We don't know of any other symptoms she may have had, but we do know that Jesus wasn't bothered by any of that – of course he wasn't – and he took her by the hand, lifted her up and healed her immediately.

Jesus has already healed many people in Capernaum, and as this particular reading continues, he'll go on and heal many others, but what I find interesting is how he did it. He 'lifted her up', but Jesus does it immediately, he takes decisive action and shows the authority he has as God's son, the authority and power *from* God and *of* God.

Jesus' healing is simple in its form, and powerful in its effect. In this instance, he takes hold of her hand and lifts her up. He needs no incantations or potions; he simply wills it to be. There is no drama (apart from what those watching might cause), Jesus does not make a big deal of it, he simply restores the sick. You are healed. All through the gospels we hear of the people healed being given a whole new lease of life. They are healed, cured spiritually and physically. Those people who have sometimes had illnesses for many years, are healed of their physical ailments, and given a fresh start. The demon possessed, the people with leprosy, the blind – all are able to be free, to start life anew, to get back to work and earn a living.

We might not be able to heal someone of a fever by a simple touch of the hand, but we can certainly lift people up. Oftentimes we read that Jesus has healed in this way, he touches people, he grasps their hands, places mud on their eyes, he lifts up, raises up, helps up.

All these are expressions of support, of confirmation and assistance. We can do all those things. Lifting someone up can be offering a helping hand with shopping, a phone call, a smile and a chat. It can be a conversation to talk over a problem, to listen to someone suffering, to pass no judgement but just to be there, to listen and empathise. Lifting someone up doesn't necessarily mean you have to take the full weight either, you are empowered by the strength of God, and it doesn't mean taking all their problems onto yourself. You help, you give a helping hand, and work through it together.

There are times when we all need someone to give a listening ear, some advice, a gentle nudge, and we can all do this together. It doesn't have to be a burden, because we hand over the problem to God and ask for his strength, and we will get it, and in the process, we have lifted up someone in need, lifted them up to Christ for his care and attention.

After Jesus has healed many - he has cured diseases and cast out demons - he goes off to pray in a quiet deserted place. He rises early in the morning and takes the time to recharge his batteries, to be lifted up himself by the care of God, and we can take comfort in that. Jesus himself needed to take space, to be quiet and let himself be alone with God, so that God will in turn refresh and nurture him, he will lift Jesus himself up, as he goes about his earthly ministry. Later, Jesus will be lifted up in a very different way, he will be lifted up on that cruel cross for all our sins, and he will go to his death in agony and humiliation, lifted up by the hands and voices of those who wanted to hold onto their power, their lifestyles, those who were frightened by his message, those who were oppressing the Jewish nation. However, the lifting up that he himself does is altogether different. It gives new life, it restores, renews and refreshes, it nurtures and gives peace.

We may not be able to heal, but we can help. We can give time and care to those who need it the most, the people who are laid low. Perhaps not by a fever as Peter's mother-in-law was, but who are laid low by circumstances, by worry, by hurt and injustice. These are the people that, through Christ, we can lift up, we can be part of the solution, by gentleness and caring, and helping restore peace through Christ our saviour.

Amen

Prayers of intercession

Generous God,

We pray today for our government and our leaders.

Scientists, nurses, doctors, and all key workers.

Those who are afraid, alone, grieving, or ill.

For the situation in America, and all places seeking peace and unity.

For ourselves, our families and friends, our hopes and dreams, for our faith in Christ to grow.

We pray for the people who need you the most, and those who think they need you 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 82

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds thy hands have made
I see the stars; I hear the mighty thunder
Thy power throughout the universe displayed

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee
How great thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee
How great Thou art, how great thou art!*

When through the woods, and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees
When I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur
And see the brook, and feel the gentle breeze
Then sings my soul ...

And when I think, that God, his Son not sparing
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in
That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin
Then sings my soul ...

When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart
Then I shall bow, in humble adoration
And then proclaim: "My God, how great thou art!"
Then sings my soul ...

Blessing

God to enfold you,
Christ to uphold you.
Spirit to lift you in heaven's sight.
So may God grace you
Heal and embrace you.
Lead you through darkness,
 into the light.

StF 648 John Bell

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