



# The **Methodist** Church

Nottingham North East Circuit - Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2020

This short act of worship, based on the service which would have been held at Church today, has been prepared for you by Rev John Wiseman , 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.

## Let's begin by singing together a familiar favourite

### STF 354 Jesus is the name we honour

Jesus is the name we honour;  
Jesus is the name we praise.  
Majestic Name above all other names,  
The highest heaven and earth proclaim  
That Jesus is our God.

Chorus.  
We will glorify,  
We will lift Him high,  
We will give Him honour and praise.  
We will glorify,  
We will lift Him high,  
We will give Him honour and praise.

Jesus is the name we worship;  
Jesus is the name we trust.  
He is the King above all other kings,  
Let all creation stand and sing  
That Jesus is our God.

Chorus...

Jesus is the Father's splendour;  
Jesus is the Father's joy.  
He will return to reign in majesty,  
And every eye at last shall see  
That Jesus is our God.

Chorus...

Phil Lawson Johnston  
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## Opening prayer: Psalm 100

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.  
<sup>2</sup> Worship the LORD with gladness;  
come into his presence with singing.  
<sup>3</sup> Know that the LORD is God.  
It is he that made us, and we are his;<sup>[a]</sup>  
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.  
<sup>4</sup> Enter his gates with thanksgiving,  
and his courts with praise.  
Give thanks to him, bless his name.  
<sup>5</sup> For the LORD is good;  
his steadfast love endures forever,  
and his faithfulness to all generations.

## This morning's reading: Matthew 21:23-27

<sup>23</sup> When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" <sup>24</sup> Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. <sup>25</sup> Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' <sup>26</sup> But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet." <sup>27</sup> So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

**Let's sing again....STF 353 Jesus is Lord creation's  
voice proclaims it'**

Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it,  
for by his power each tree and flower  
was planned and made.

Jesus is Lord! The universe declares it  
sun, moon and stars in heaven cry:  
'Jesus is Lord!

'Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Lord!  
Praise him with alleluias, for Jesus is Lord.

Jesus is Lord! Yet from his throne eternal  
in flesh he came to die in pain on Calvary's tree.  
Jesus is Lord! From him all life proceeding  
-yet gave his life a ransom thus setting us free.

'Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Lord!  
Praise him with alleluias, for Jesus is Lord.

3Jesus is Lord! O'er sin the mighty conqueror;  
from death he rose and all his foes  
shall own his name.

Jesus is Lord! God sends his Holy Spirit  
to show by works of power that Jesus is Lord.

'Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Lord!  
Praise him with alleluias, for Jesus is Lord.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=prEq8NOx3vs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prEq8NOx3vs)

**Today's message:**

I wonder what your favourite police drama is,  
assuming of course that you like police dramas

Is it perhaps Line of Duty, Morse, or Broadchurch?  
Do you prefer something a little more exotic like  
Wallander, Inspector Montalbano or one of the  
many Scandinavian series that have become so  
popular? Or maybe you like something a little  
more light hearted, a police drama set in a place  
where it appears someone gets killed every week  
and where no one in their right mind would ever  
live like Midsummer or the supposed Paradise isle  
of Saint Marie.

Part of any police drama normally involves an  
interrogation scene where quite often one or  
maybe two police officers will ask a suspect a  
series of question, all the while skirting around and

avoiding the one question they are desperate to  
ask...."Did you murder Billy Johnson?"

Off course they can't ask it directly because they  
don't want to give away their game plan too soon.

If the person they are interviewing isn't the  
murderer then perhaps by appearing to ask a  
series of innocent questions he or she might let  
something slip and give away the killers real  
identity. If the person in front of them had  
committed the crime, then a direct accusation  
would simply mean every question was met with  
the standard 'No Comment' response. No, in order  
to get their suspect talking they need to ask lots of  
other everyday questions first.

With that kind of process in mind let's think about  
the context of today's bible passage. Jesus has just  
made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm  
Sunday. He has brought the temple, the main focal  
point of Jewish worship to a standstill by  
overturning the tables, thus condemning its  
commercialisation by people out to exploit pilgrims  
to the city. He has healed the blind and the  
crippled and then to top it all off he has compared  
the current religious hierarchy to a fig tree that  
bears no fruit!

This is the context in which our passage begins  
with Jesus finding himself face to face with the  
chief priests and elders. And just like our  
investigative police officers, they too although  
desperate to ask Jesus a direct question, attempt  
to set a trap for Jesus, hoping that as they skirt  
around the main issue, Jesus' own words will trip  
him up.

What they are desperate to ask is...."So do you  
think you are God's Messiah?" But they conceal  
their true aim by asking an equally problematic  
question...by whose authority do you do all this?

The '**You**' of course referring to this country boy  
from northern Galilee, who has travelled down to  
Jerusalem with an assortment of odd bods and mis  
fits. Travelled to the cosmopolitan heart of the  
nation, travelled to its holiest shrine, the temple,  
which has been controlled and administered for  
centuries by the chief priests and religious elite,  
and acted, well acted as if he owned the place  
judging by his antics.

Just who did he think we was, because the only person who might conceivably have more influence, more say, more power than the chief priests in organising how the temple operated would be God's chosen one, God's anointed one, God's Messiah.

That's what they really want to ask him... 'is that' who he thought he was? Only of course they can't, they won't, they daren't.

And so as they pussy foot around the issue, Jesus manages to remain light footed as he dodge the cut and thrust of the debate instigated by religious leaders. Finally it is a question about authority with which they hope to trap him. But of course they are not going to get an answer are they because Jesus does what Jesus often does: he answers a question with another question, in this case one of his parables. But that's literally a story for another day.

Let's stick with the issue of authority because of course all throughout his ministry Jesus' authority has been remarked upon.

Today our impressions of authority can be mixed. Many people associate the term 'authority' with making them do something they don't want to do, with being strict, with being oppressive. And as we know that sort of authority does not go over well when it is imposed on people. We only need to look at the recent protests in Belarus to see that.

Yet I suspect there are not many of us who would not have liked this country to have been guided, directed and led by someone showing authority during the past few months, what with the issues of inadequate PPE for health professionals, the scandal of care homes, ministers and government officials breaking locking and going unpunished and now the fiasco of exam results. I wonder what grade we might give to our current leadership and the authority or lack of it they have shown. Simply being elected to a position of power, being elevated to a position of authority doesn't mean that you will actually have it when it counts, that you can show it when it's needed, that people will respect it.

Thankfully authority can be questioned, in the case of politics we will see it in a few months time in America. And it should be questioned. For authority to be true, for it to be authentic, for it to

be believable, it must be held accountable. Authority should be tried and tested

True authority should demands that there is a palpable connection between who you say you are, or indeed between who other acclaim you to be and what you actually say and do. There should be a correlation between word and deed, between ideas and implementation, between vision and action.

Authority should only be accepted when there is integrity to go alongside it. If persons enter into positions of authority with no regard to how their words are lived out, their authority should, at the very least, be questioned and ultimately, be stripped of its power.

Throughout his ministry Jesus is acclaimed and acknowledged as not just someone who taught with authority,( Mark 1:22, Matt 7:29), certainly with a different kind of authority to the current religious establishment. While they act as hypocrites, saying one thing but doing the other, Jesus certainly backed up his authority with how he lived out his life. One in which he sought a closer relationship with God and with others, through his words, deeds and being.

Such authority began not just to affect the lives of those who heard him, believed him and started to follow him, but the ripples of the effect he was having on people lives suddenly; threatened to overwhelm the position, privilege and power of the religious elite in Jerusalem. No wonder then that they plotted to trick him, to trip him up, to trap him.

And one can certainly see how that God given was tempted, tried, tested and taunted. Tempted by the temptations he faced throughout his ministry to abandon his true vocation and to chose the easy path rather than 'the way' revealed by his Father.

Tried by the midnight kangaroo court organised once again by the priests and religious elite, tried by Herod, tried by Pilate.

Tested as he was flogged, tested as he shed tears in the garden of Gethsemane, tested as he was taunted one final time. Taunted to use that 'so called authority' he claimed to possess to summon down a legion of angels to rescue him. Tempted, tried, tested and taunted to death.

Only to conquer death and rise again to life. Only to not just offer further proof where his earthly authority had come from, came from but now to declare with utter assurance, in some of the final words Jesus speaks in Matthew's gospel that now "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth' (Matt 28:18)

And with **THAT** authority Jesus gives his disciples and us a task, a job, a commission to do. To go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you, remembering that Jesus will be with us always, to the end of the age.

Now I might not possess the authority to command you to now go and do exactly that, but I know a man who does. So what are you waiting for...Go. Amen

### **Prayers of Intercessions**

We pray for...

The stories that have dominated our news headlines over the past week.

All those adjusting to new routines back at school, college or work

For all those ministers settling down in new circuits and circuits beginning to work alongside their new ministers

We pray for our local community

For our church family

For those dear to us

And finally we join our voices to say The Lord's Prayer together...Our Father

**Let's conclude this worship by singing  
STF 317 At the name of Jesus**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=OI2rKRCWmOU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OI2rKRCWmOU)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=HH0Yn5Unwh8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HH0Yn5Unwh8)

At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow,  
every tongue confess him king of glory now;  
this the Father's pleasure, that we call him Lord,  
who from the beginning was the mighty word.

Humbled for a season, to receive a name  
from the lips of sinners unto whom he came;  
faithfully he bore it spotless to the last,  
brought it back victorious when from death he  
passed.

Bore it up triumphant with its human light,  
through all ranks of creatures to the central height;  
to the eternal Godhead, to the Father's throne,  
filled it with the glory of his triumph won.

In your hearts enthrone him; there let him subdue  
all that is not holy, all that is not true;  
crown him as your captain in temptation's hour,  
let his will enfold you in its light and power.

With his Father's glory Jesus comes again,  
angel hosts attend him and announce his reign;  
for all wreaths of empire meet upon his brow,  
and our hearts confess him king of glory now.

### **A Blessing...**

**Let us go from this place with the authority given  
to those disciples, to heal, to restore, to make  
whole again, for it is in Jesus' name that we go.**

**Amen**