

Written Service Sunday June 11th 2023
A service of worship for use at home
Prepared by Deacon Helen Snowball

This short act of worship has been prepared for you 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.

Introit StF 97 – When all your mercies, O my God.

1 When all thy mercies, O my God,
my rising soul surveys,
transported with the view, I'm lost
in wonder, love, and praise.

3 Ten thousand thousand precious gifts
my daily thanks employ,
nor is the least a cheerful heart
which tastes those gifts with joy.

2 Unnumbered comforts on my soul
thy tender care bestowed,
before my infant heart conceived
from whom those comforts flowed.

4 Through every period of my life
your goodness I'll pursue,
and after death in distant worlds
the glorious theme renew.

6 Through all eternity to thee,
a joyful song I'll raise;
for O, eternity's too short
to utter all your praise.

Some of you may have noticed that on the current plan, the first 6 weeks have been allocated as discipleship pathways, and this week we are looking at hospitality or being open. On the Methodist website there is lots of information about the discipleship pathways, and those of you who came to the vision day we had in February at Bestwood would have seen the different displays we had of the Methodist Way of Life pathways. Today's theme is Open, being open to showing hospitality, to showing generosity to one another, and especially to the people outside of church.

Hymn StF 161 Speak O Lord

1. Speak, O Lord, as we come to You
To receive the food of Your Holy Word
Take Your truth, plant it deep in us
Shape and fashion us in Your likeness
That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us
All Your purposes for Your glory

2. Teach us Lord, full obedience
Holy reverence, true humility
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
In the radiance of your purity
Cause our faith to rise, cause our
eyes to see
Your majestic love and authority
Words of power that can never fail
Let their truth prevail over unbelief.

3. Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds
Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
That will echo down through eternity
And by grace we'll stand on Your promises
And by faith we'll walk as You walk with us
Speak, O Lord, till Your church is built
And the earth is filled with Your glory

*Source: Musixmatch
Songwriters: Keith Getty / Stuart Townend
Speak, O Lord lyrics © Thank You Music Ltd.*

Prayers of Adoration, Confession and Thanksgiving

We worship you, Lord our God, we worship you.

We praise your name for the great works that you have done. For the rivers and streams, and mountains and valleys, all creatures on this earth – all creation praises your name.

We worship you, Lord our God, we worship you.

We praise your name for the seasons – for the refreshing showers and the warming sunshine, the breezes and the pouring rain – all creation praises your name.

We worship you, Lord our God, we worship you.

We praise your name for the grace and mercy you give us, for your pure and ceaseless love, for your ever present gifts in our lives.

We worship you, Lord our God, we worship you.

We may not always follow your commands, O God, we forget, we go our own way, we think we know best.

Sometimes we act without thinking, without considering the impact of our words on others, we think we can manage without you.

Sometimes we don't think of other people, the people who don't know you in their lives, the people who are the most in need, the people we should care, but sometimes we forget.

Sometimes we forget your great mercy for us, we forget that you have given us everything we could ever need, we forget to thank you and praise your name. We forget to ask for forgiveness for the things we have done wrong.

So now, in a moment of silence, we bring to you, our God, the things that we wish to ask forgiveness for.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

This is his gracious word:

'Your sins are forgiven.'

Amen. Thanks be to God.

Hymn StF 20 Be Still

1. Be still for the presence of the Lord
The Holy one is here
Come bow before him now
In reverence and fear
In Him no sin is found
We stand on Holy ground
Be still for the presence of the Lord
The Holy one is here.
2. Be still for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around
He burns with Holy fire
With splendour He is crowned
How awesome is the sight
Our radiant King of light
Be still for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around.
3. Be still for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place
He comes to cleanse and heal
To minister His grace
No work too hard for Him
In faith receive from Him
Be still for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place.

Readings:

2 Kings 4:8-10

8 One day Elisha went to Shunem. And a well-to-do woman was there, who urged him to stay for a meal. So whenever he came by, he stopped there to eat. 9 She said to her husband, "I know that this man who often comes our way is a holy man of God. 10 Let's make a small room on the roof and put in it a bed and a table, a chair and a lamp for him. Then he can stay there whenever he comes to us."

John 4:4-14

4 Now he had to go through Samaria. 5 So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" 8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.[a])

10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

11 "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

13 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Reflection

It's quite unusual for me to use an Old Testament reading, I tend to stick to the new, but I suppose that's something I should work on. But this one was such a good example of

hospitality that I had to use it. This woman in Shunem, who is described as being 'well to do' has already invited Elisha for a meal, and it has become a regular event, each time Elisha is in town, he stops with them for a meal. It's all very friendly, and hospitable, a meal with a friend it seems – but then something changes. The woman announces that she knows Elisha is a Holy Man of God, and she wants to make a special room for him on the roof so that he can stay with them. This all sounds very nice doesn't it? She is 'well to do', so can afford to use her resources to feed him, and they have a very nice roof space to make into a spare room so he has somewhere to stay each time he visits. However, two questions arise – does she invite him to stay because she finds out he is a holy man so may be able to help them out, and does it matter? She's offering hospitality, and I'm sure a travelling prophet like Elisha would need a decent bed to rest his head on when on his travels, so he'd be very grateful. Does it matter if her motivation is not simply 'that man needs help' but instead 'that man is holy and might be able to help us at some point'? I can't say which it is, the fact of the matter is she helped Elisha when he needed it, and I'm sure he was very grateful.

In the New Testament reading from John's gospel, we heard a familiar reading of Jesus talking to the Samaritan woman. This is part of probably one of the most famous encounters that Jesus had. Most of us know about the woman at the well, I've preached on it – here in fact – and you may have heard many sermons about it. We think about Jesus talking to the woman which was scandalous, and her also being a Samaritan making it doubly scandalous, and then her disputing with him and questioning him, and finally going back to her village and preaching the good news to everyone who lived there. And we remember that the villagers then spent two days with Jesus, and all became faithful believers. But I want us to look at from a different angle. I'd like us to think about the hospitality aspect, as this is what this week is about, hospitality and openness.

Who is being hospitable in this story then? Jesus has asked the woman for a drink, is this just his way of engaging her in conversation? Quite possibly, but he is also allowing her to return the favour by showing hospitality. It is interesting to note that she doesn't actually give Jesus a drink. Have you ever noticed that? If you read through the whole passage you'll see, despite Jesus asking for a drink and the discussion which follows about water and buckets and living water and husbands etc etc... but in fact the woman never actually gives Jesus a drink. He has asked for water, the woman has commented that he has no bucket and their discussion continues, but Jesus never got his water. He is sitting in the heat of the midday sun, with no water, despite having asked. I think the woman is so distracted at the man speaking to her, the fact of the turn their conversation takes and the knowledge that he has, that she gets distracted from the initial request. She is so excited by what he tells her and how strongly she feels about him, she rushed back to her village, leaving the poor man parched. But Jesus has offered her the opportunity to give hospitality, which is a gift in itself. Two gifts in hospitality – giving it, and receiving it. Is it harder to receive hospitality, or any kind of service? I think we often find it difficult to be served, to allow someone else to share their gift of hospitality with us. Jesus both accepted and showed hospitality in his ministry, we often read of him eating with people, being at someone's house, strangely being served. He always said he came to serve, not to be served, and yet in someone else's house he was being served. If I come to your house for tea, I wouldn't expect to go into your cupboards and make myself some lunch, you would make the lunch for me, and then if you came to mine on another occasion, then I would return the favour. Or not necessarily when you taste my cooking...

This woman at the well, so talked about, written about and read about in literature, had sermons written about her and has had people thinking they know all about her – possibly

went home that night really cross with herself – ‘Oh I forgot to give him the water!’ she had missed her chance to show hospitality.

So have there been times when you’ve had the chance to make someone welcome, to be hospitable and you’ve missed it? I suppose there are often times when we could have spoken to someone, we could have shown a little more interest in someone, we could have chatted a bit longer. Hospitality isn’t just tea and cake, its generosity of spirit, its being open to new experiences and encounters, to being hospitable to all the people we meet as we go about our daily lives.

Perhaps we have missed the opportunity to show hospitality to someone because we weren’t paying enough attention, perhaps we didn’t want to because the person wasn’t someone we’re used to dealing with, maybe we feared rejection or mocking, or we assumed they wouldn’t be interested.

Sometimes we also find it hard to receive hospitality, don’t we? We may feel we ought to be doing the serving, but it’s as gracious to allow someone else to share their gifts of hospitality with you, as it is the other way around. Jesus was good at receiving hospitality, he often ate with others, shared in meals at people’s houses – even the houses of people he shouldn’t be associating with, like Simon the Leper and Zacchaeus. He called all sorts of people to share in his ministry, he never turned anyone away, he was always open to caring and showing love to anyone.

We have been blessed with so many opportunities, we are blessed with buildings, space to let people in, to share our faith in God in action. We have so many opportunities to invite people in, to talk to them of our faith and of God in our lives.

So for us all to think about – are there other opportunities for us to be open – to show hospitality to people who don’t know God?

Are there people that you’d like to talk to about Jesus, about your faith life, and you could show hospitality to? Let’s pray that God will guide us to be good servers, to be good at welcoming new people, to show hospitality and generosity of spirit, all in the name of Jesus Christ, our saviour.

Amen.

Hymn StF 409 Let us build a house where love can dwell

1 Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
**All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.**

2 Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God’s children dare to seek
to dream God’s reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God’s grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:
All are welcome ...

3 Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees
us:

All are welcome ...

4 Let us build a house where hands will
reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger

All are welcome ...

Prayers of Intercession

Pray for the continuing situation in Ukraine, for the people whose lives have been devastated by the bombing of the dam in Kherson.

Pray for the people affected by the train crash in India, for the survivors, and families of those killed.

Pray for our government, for wisdom and integrity.

Pray for the Nottingham North East Circuit, all our local churches, and all the faithful followers of Jesus.

Pray for those who are grieving, lonely, those who need God the most at this time, and those who think they need him the least.

Pray for yourself, for your family, for your friends and your worshipping family.

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,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn StF 65 Sing of the Lord's goodness

1. Sing of the Lord's goodness,
Father of all wisdom,
Come to him and bless his name.
Mercy he has shown us,
His love is forever,
Faithful to the end of days.

Chorus: *Come then all you nations
Sing of the Lord's goodness
Melodies and thanks to God.
Ring out the Lord's glory,
Praise him with your music,
Come to him and bless his name.*

2. Power he has wielded,
Honour is his garment,
Risen from the snares of death.
His word he has spoken,
One bread he has broken,
New life he now gives to all.

3. Courage in our darkness,
Comfort in our sorrow,
Spirit of our God most high;
Solace for the weary,
Splendour of the living God.
Pardon for the sinner,

4. Praise him with your singing,
Praise him with the trumpet,
Praise God with the lute and harp;
Praise him with the cymbals,
Praise him with your dancing,
Praise God till the end of days.

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Blessing

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
The love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
Be with us all, now and evermore.
Amen.