



# The Methodist Church

## SHERWOOD METHODIST CHURCH - SUNDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> MARCH 2020

This short act of worship, based on the service to be held at Church today, has been prepared for you to use if you are unable to attend church. 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

### A CALL TO WORSHIP FOR MOTHERING SUNDAY

“As a mother comforts her child, so shall I myself comfort you.” Let us worship God. *(Isaiah 66:13)*

### HYMN: ‘SING OF THE LORD’S GOODNESS’ (Singing The Faith 65)

Sing/ Read /Pray /Proclaim the words

- 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 for ever,  
faithful to the end of days.

*Come, then, all you nations,  
sing of your Lord's goodness,  
melodies of praise and thanks to God.  
Ring out the Lord's glory,  
praise him with your music,  
worship 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,  
pardon for the sinner,  
splendour of the living God.

- 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.

*(Ernest Sands)*

### PRAYER OF PRAISE AND CONFESSION

Loving God, you care for us at every moment in our lives: like a good mother, like a good father, giving life, giving birth; with us from the beginning: cradling and feeding, watching and

carrying, walking alongside our first steps, listening to our first faltering words, knowing our fears, drying our tears.

You care for each one of us all your children, all humanity through our growing in grace, our hunger, our hope, our discoveries and our rebellions. *(be silent in confession for a while)*

When we ask for bread, you do not give us a stone; when we are lost, you find us; when we leave home, and come back penniless, you run to welcome and embrace us. You never give up on your children, all our lives long; and we praise you, loving God. Amen.

### A CHANT FROM THE IONA COMMUNITY

Behold, Behold, I make all things new  
Beginning with you, and starting from today.  
Behold, behold, I make all things new,  
My promise is true, for I am Christ the way.

### TODAY’S GOSPEL READING: JOHN 9:1-12

*(You will find the full text of the reading on the last sheet of this short order of service)*

### A REFLECTION ON THE READING

*JOHN 9:12.a – “Where is he?”*

A man, blind from birth, sits or stands by the roadside. As Jesus and the disciples walk along they look at him. Now in those days, the thinking was that illness, tragedy, struggles in life and often death were because of sin – not just your own sin, but possibly the sins of your ancestors passed on. Hence this strange question John 9 verse 2: “Rabbi, teacher ... who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?”

We hear, and sometimes think and sometimes say the same sort of thing about our young people – it’s their parents. Or the poor – they shouldn’t squander their cash. Those who don’t fit in. The asylum seekers, the homeless, the addicted. It’s their upbringing. It’s their own fault. It’s where they’re from. “God helps them

as helps themselves". John 9 verse 2: "Rabbi, teacher ... who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?"

Jesus essentially says – don't talk twaddle – it's not because of his sin, or his mum's or his dad's sin – this poor soul is just blind, but I'm the light of the world - now watch light coming into this man's life. Things are going to change. And they do. For this blind man – his sight his health, his personal well-being. But also, symbolically, in the hands of John the Gospel writer – light comes into life and things begin to change – not just for this man, or the disciples, or the Jewish people, but for the wider world – for all of humanity.

Great stuff to hear. A sound principal. But still that question at the end of the reading. Where is he? Where is he in our personal lives.? But also - where is he in the world? And what's he doing about it.

*JOHN 9:12.a – "Where is he?"*

There's lots going on in this story, lots of principles that Jesus and the Gospel writer lays down, and parallels for us and our lives that might help answer this question. I'll take Christ's direct action and involvement, and the principal for us for granted. That goes without saying. But I want to end by picking up quickly on just 2 other principles.

First of all, Jesus challenges the question and the accepted answer. John 9 verse 2: "Rabbi, teacher ... who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?" In 2020 are the people of Syria doomed to despair through the patterns and habits and interests of groups who have no interest at heart but their own and will stop at nothing to see them through – whether by bomb or bullet. We have to challenge the question – and there is God.

*JOHN 9:12.a – "Where is he?"*

Will the great colossus of national and corporate greed ride unstoppable across the earth – holding her poor in debt forever, laying waste her land, filling her air with a shroud of pollution? We have to challenge the question – and there is God. Is there no escape for the people of Ireland from the mistakes of their forebears? Always factions, hating, mistrusting, chained to past politics and history? We have to challenge the question – and there is God.

So, first of all, Jesus challenges the question and the accepted answer about what's inevitable and what can be changed. Secondly Jesus is sent and sends in turn – the blind man, Jesus' own followers and us in this generation. The writer, John, is clever in telling us an apparently unimportant detail. It's not by chance that the pool where the blind man goes to bathe after the miracle is called Siloam. The word Siloam means 'sent' – it tells us in verse 6. Siloam means 'sent'.

A very clear reminder when this story was first told that Jesus was 'sent'. The one sent by God to bring light and life. This isn't a passing prophet or good man. Sent. The one sending those in need – this blind man in this instance – on to a cleansing of body, mind, soul and life. The terrified of Yemen. The marginalised of Palestine. Sent. The one sending his followers - the disciples then, and us in 2020 - on to make a difference. To the brow-beaten and needy of Nottingham. Where is God in the world? One answer is - where God sends us.

So, God sends us alongside others to make a difference. Where is God in the world? Where we are - that is where God is. And God wants us to challenge the question and the answer over what seems inevitable and unchangeable for the world. Where is God in the world? Where we challenge the way things are - that is where God is. You can't get insurance to cover what'll be involved or where it'll take you. It's a risk and an unknown quantity. But then, that's the way the Gospel is.

## **A PRAYER FOR MOTHERS & BIBLICAL MOTHERS**

Eve, mother of our humanity, teach us true wisdom, that all life is precious in God's sight.

Sarah, Hannah and Elizabeth, yearning for a child Comfort and strengthen all who know the pain of infertility.

Hagar, condemned to the harshness of exile, sustain those who struggle to feed their sons and daughters.

Rebecca, bride from a far-off land, welcome those who must bring up families among strangers.

Rachel weeping for your children, weep with all whose children have disappeared.

Jochebed, mother of Moses and Miriam, lend your ingenuity to all who seek protection for their children.

Naomi and Ruth, bound together by a love greater than blood, show us how bitter disappointment can become the sweetness of hope.

Mary daughter of Israel, mother of Jesus, share with us God's secrets you have pondered deep within your heart. AMEN.

*(Claire Amos)*

### **HYMN: 'CHRIST IS ALIVE' (Singing the Faith 297)**

Sing/ Read /Pray /Proclaim the words

- 1 Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.  
The cross stands empty to the sky.  
Let streets and homes with praises ring.  
Love, drowned in death, shall never die.**
- 2 Christ is alive! No longer bound  
to distant years in Palestine,  
but saving, healing, here and now,  
and touching every place and time.**
- 3 In every insult, rift and war,  
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,  
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,  
and lives, where even hope has died.**
- 4 Women and men, in age and youth,  
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,  
and find the way, the life, the truth,  
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.**
- 5 Christ is alive, and comes to bring  
good news to this and every age,  
till earth and sky and ocean ring  
with joy, with justice, love and praise.**

*(Brian Wren)*

### **A PRAYER OF BLESSING**

Let this be the day, a new day and a new beginning for us and we pray ... O Lord, extend our friendship, deepen our faith, widen our hope, pour out your Spirit, send out your grace, reach out your love so that we may grow in your name AMEN.

### **JOHN 9:1-12 A man born blind receives his sight**

<sup>1</sup>As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup>His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'

<sup>3</sup>Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. <sup>4</sup>We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. <sup>5</sup>As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.'

<sup>6</sup>When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, <sup>7</sup>saying to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

<sup>8</sup>The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, 'Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?' <sup>9</sup>Some were saying, 'It is he.' Others were saying, 'No, but it is someone like him.' He kept saying, 'I am the man.'  
<sup>10</sup>But they kept asking him, 'Then how were your eyes opened?'

<sup>11</sup>He answered, 'The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, "Go to Siloam and wash." Then I went and washed and received my sight.'  
<sup>12</sup>They said to him, 'Where is he?' He said, 'I do not know.'