

Sunday January 29th
A service of worship for use at
home Prepared by Susan Johnson

Today our focus is on what it means to be blessed and what that might lead to

Micah 6: 6-8

Hear what the LORD says:
Rise, plead your case before the mountains,
He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

Hymn - Hear the call of the kingdom 407 StheF

Hear the call of the kingdom
Lift your eyes to the King
Let His song rise within you
As a fragrant offering
Of how God rich in mercy
Came in Christ to redeem
All who trust in His unfailing grace

Hear the call of the Kingdom
To be children of light
With the mercy of heaven
The humility of Christ
Walking justly before Him
Loving all that is right
That the life of Christ may shine through us

King of Heaven we will answer the call
We will follow bringing hope to the world
Filled with passion, filled with power to
proclaim
Salvation in Jesus' name

Hear the call of the Kingdom
To reach out to the lost
With the Father's compassion
In the wonder of the cross
Bringing peace and forgiveness
And a hope yet to come
Let the nations put their trust in Him

King of Heaven ...

Our next hymn reminds us of our need to remain close to God.

Hymn - Breathe on me breath of God 370 StheF

Breathe on me, breath of God.
Fill me with life anew
that I may love what thou dost love
and do what thou wouldst do.

Breath on me, breath of God
until my heart is pure,
until my will is one with thine
to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
till I am wholly thine,
until this earthly part of me
glows with thy fire divine.

Breathe on me breath of God
so I shall never die,
but live with thee the perfect life
of thine eternity.

Loving gracious God we come to you this morning to give you our thanks and praise.

We come just as we are with all our joys and sorrows longing to be close to you. As we worship may your Holy Spirit fill us, remind us of the ways your son Jesus walked and empower us to be your holy people. In Jesus name we pray.

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.*

Our reading from the Psalms leads us to see a way forward as to how we may live a blessed life.

Psalm 15

O LORD, who may abide in your tent?
Who may dwell on your holy hill?
Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right,
and speak the truth from their heart;
who do not slander with their tongue,
and do no evil to their friends,
nor take up a reproach against their neighbours;
in whose eyes the wicked are despised,
but who honour those who fear the LORD;
who stand by their oath even to their hurt;
who do not lend money at interest,
and do not take a bribe against the innocent.
Those who do these things shall never be moved.

Hymn - Let love be real, in giving and receiving (StF 615)

Let love be real, in giving and receiving,
without the need to manage and to own;
A haven free from posing and pretending,
Where every weakness may be safely known.
Give me your hand, along the desert pathway,
Give me your love wherever we may go.

*As God loves us, so let us love each other;
With no demands, just open hands and space to grow.*

Let love be real, not grasping or confining,
That strange embrace that holds yet sets us free;
That helps us face the risk of truly living,
And makes us brave to be what we might be.
Give me your strength when all my words are weakness;
Give me your love in spite of all you know.

As God loves us ...

Let love be real, with no manipulation,
No secret wish to harness or control;
Let us accept each other's incompleteness,
And share the joy of learning to be whole.
Give me your hope through dreams and disappointments
Give me your trust when all my failings show.

As God loves us...

And now we come to the main passage for our thinking today.

Matthew 5:1-12 *The teaching of Christ: Beatitudes*

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

I invite you to once more read those words, asking God to reveal to you which one/ones are particularly important for you today.

The other day my husband was wanting to get started on a project: he was going to put the television screen on the wall, rather than on the TV table. So he sat down with pen and paper and the computer and began research, made notes, and came up with a plan. Then he told me! Just the essentials because that's all I needed to know.

In a way this is a bit like Jesus in this story. Here he is at the start of his ministry ; he had been baptised, been tempted in the wilderness, gathered around him his disciples and was now ready to tell the rest of his community what his life was all about now. It's called the Sermon on the Mount.

The beginning verses are the Beatitudes: a radically bold statement of **Jesus' intent to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth, which will bring true peace and freedom for all who dare to follow him as his disciples. It is through those disciples that his kingdom will bring blessing to all of the peoples of the earth.**

Blessed are you who are poor in spirit requires us to look to Jesus to see how he lived, He said 'By myself I can do nothing'. He needed to spend time seeking God's will, knowing the way to behave, to be close to God. We are called to follow in that way acknowledging our often poverty of spirit in leaving God out of our thinking and being.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. I had always assumed that this meant people who are mourning loved ones who have died but in doing research for this service I discovered I have been not been right. Commentaries reveal that the mourning is our mourning of our state of being before God in that we have not always followed his ways. Here's two questions from one of those commentaries. Are you broken-hearted over your inadequacy to be genuinely good to others? Do you see how far you are from living the life described in the Bible?

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Jesus – described as gentle Jesus meek and mild and as having meekness and majesty in a song. Not meek in the sense of being a timid doormat , a wimp or a pushover. Meek in the sense that you find your strength in God , not self. Meek in allowing and acknowledging God to work in and through you.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Is there a longing in each one of us to be the answer to this verse from the Lord's prayer – may your kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven? A real hunger to see justice come for all, people to be treated equally, for all to be able to find fullness of life. Different groups of people today here in UK and world wide are being held back by the treatment of others, Who can you think of? children who access education, women whose are seen as 'less than men', people of differing sexualities, different races and cultures different abilities – all are welcome and there is room prevailing Methodist views today. If we have this longing we will be filled and blessed.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Slow to judge and quick to forgive. Can we always look with mercy and compassion on others? Are we able to show mercy to those who are different to ourselves? I have heard many Christians condemn the refugees who come to this country. Saying things like this is our country, we don't want you here taking our jobs, bringing your strange ways and I've been horrified. How is that the gospel. How is that living as Jesus would. I counter usually with the question what you do if you were living in that situation?

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. A heart of love is required – 1 Corinthians 13; 1-13 is often read at wedding. Why not read it again for yourself?

Blessed are the peacemakers . A prerequisite for being a peacemaker is humility. You don't think you are great in your own eyes. You have no demands on the others. You are not conceited, therefore making others have a hard time with you. You have no need to defend your own positions or opinions, so therefore you don't argue with others. You are flexible and willing to change so it is good for the others. You don't count your own will as anything worth preserving. *"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."* Romans 12:18.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake today All over the world people are facing Persecution - people are hurting where their lives are not being fulfilled to their highest potential. Form children who have no access to education, women who are seen as second class citizens, people of faith, people of different sexualities, people who have physical or mental difficulties. In general we fear those who are different but God is calling us to show goodness and mercy and righteousness. Its' the right thing to do. Often a struggle to determine to do the right thing, especially if it goes against what we have previously believed. Methodist church today is being asked to live with contradictory convictions due to considerations around same sex marriage. There is an expectation that we will treat eachother well at the same times as holding to our beliefs

Verses after the beatitudes are the ones that remind us that we are to be the salt of the earth, changing lives and making a different by the way we live, always following the examples of Jesus so that God's kingdom may come here on earth.

Put simply all of these ways that Jesus gives us to live are asking us to be a part of a movement that can and will change the world. So let's move together in this. Amen

Hymn - More like you, Jesus, more like you (StF 505)

*More like you, Jesus, more like you,
fill my heart with your desire
to make me more like you.
More like you, Jesus, more like you,
touch my lips with holy fire
and make me more like you.*

Lord, you are my mercy,
Lord you are my grace,
all my deepest sins have
forever been erased.
Draw me to you presence,
lead me in your ways,
I long to bring you glory
in righteousness and praise

More like you...

Lord you are compassion,
and never ending love,
for you have redeemed me
by your precious blood.
Create in me a clean heart,
a spirit that is new, the joy of my salvation
is only found in you.

More like you ...

Prayers of intercession

We hold before God those who are facing discrimination and persecution today. May they know peace.

We hold before God those who are struggling to find peace in their lives due to war or violence or hatred. May they find hope today.

We hold before God those who have been forced from their homes for whatever reason and seek refuge in this country. May we be a blessing to them.

We hold before God our government as they struggle to work through ways to live that will support all. May they be guided by your Holy Spirit so that your kingdom May come.

We hold before God today our friends and families> whatever their situation today may they know your healing, your love, mercy and compassion.

And finally we come before you with open hearts and ask that you would guide us and keep us close to you.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Hymn - God of justice, Saviour to all (StF 699)

God of Justice, Saviour to all
Came to rescue the weak and the poor
Came to serve and not be served
And Jesus, You have called us
Freely we've received now freely we will give
We must go, live to feed the hungry
Stand beside the broken, we must go
Stepping forward keep us from just singing
Move us into action, we must go
Fill us up, send us out

To act justly everyday
Loving mercy in every way
Walking humbly before You God
You have shown us what You require

Freely we've received now freely we will give
We must go, live to feed the hungry
Stand beside the broken, we must go
Stepping forward keep us from just singing
Move us into action, we must go
Fill us up, send us out
Fill us up, send us out Lord

To act justly, loving mercy
We must go, we must go
To the broken and the hurting
We must go, we must go
We must go, live to feed the hungry
Stand beside the broken, we must go
Stepping forward keep us from just singing
Move us into action, we must go
Fill us up, send us out.

Blessing

May God's blessing surround us each day as we trust him and walk in his way. May his spirit within guard and keep us from sin.
Go in peace. Go in joy. Go in love.