

Sunday February 12th 2023

A service of worship for use at home

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Psalm 112 v 4&5:

Even in darkness light dawns for the upright who are gracious, compassionate and righteous. Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely and conduct their affairs with justice

Hymn - StF 255 The Kingdom of God

1 The kingdom of God is justice and joy;
For Jesus restores what sin would destroy.
God's power and glory in Jesus we know;
And here and hereafter the kingdom shall grow.

2 The kingdom of God is mercy and grace;
The captives are freed, the sinners find place,
The outcast are welcomed God's banquet to share;
And hope is awakened in place of despair.

3 The kingdom of God is challenge and choice:
Believe the good news, repent and rejoice!
God's love for us sinners brought Christ to his cross:
Our crisis of judgement for gain or for loss.

4 God's kingdom is come, the gift and the goal;
In Jesus begun, in heaven made whole.
The heirs of the kingdom shall answer his call;
And all things cry "Glory!" to God all in all.

Reading: 1 Corinthians 3:1-9

Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere human beings? What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters are anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labour. For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

Poem: Challenge

The challenges we face each day
Present themselves in various ways
We call upon a range of folk
In reaching out beyond the yolk
To fill the void; to meet the challenge
To show compassion not revenge
When words are tough
And life is rough
There's more to meet the eye
To answer the question why
What purpose do we seek to follow
That does not make our lives feel hollow
Building relationships all round
Walking now on solid ground
Reaching out to see each face
Filling life with truth and grace

Reading: Matthew 5:21-26

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Reading: Amos 5: 21-24

I hate, I despise your religious festivals;
your assemblies are a stench to me.
Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them.
Though you bring choice fellowship offerings,
I will have no regard for them.
Away with the noise of your songs!
I will not listen to the music of your harps.
But let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream!

Hymn:

When The Road Is Rough And Steep
Fix Your Eyes Upon Jesus
He Alone Has Power To Keep
Fix Your Eyes Upon Him
Jesus Is A Gracious Friend
One On Whom You Can Depend
He Is Faithful To The End
Fix Your Eyes Upon Him

Sermon: Compassion with Integrity

Mark 6:32-34:

They went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. He began teaching them many things.

Compassion - Don't Pretend
Commitment - Be honest
Consideration - Let actions speak louder than words

How often do you get home at the end of a busy day and think I'd like just to sit down and have some time to myself? Maybe the day has been hectic, you've been wound up by things around you. There might not be the opportunity at that point but it is good to ensure that at some point we do rest. That is taking care of ourselves. Jesus recognised this which is why he took the disciples off to have some time out of the fast lane.

He knew that they could not just keep on going, going, going. He knew they didn't run on Duracell batteries even though they had to be ever-ready. The Methodist Way of Life talks about doing

things as far as we are able in recognition of the fact that we don't need to beat ourselves up when we cannot take on endless responsibilities. It's about not pretending, if we are to show compassion it needs to begin with ourselves. Self-awareness enables us to know when to stop and take a rest so that we don't end up feeling that it's something else that we have not managed. Compassion isn't real if we feel forced to do it. Let's think about Elijah who had had a stressful time. He'd just had a massive struggle with the prophets of Baal and due to that was being threatened and pursued by Jezebel, the Queen so angels took care of him (read about it in 1 Kings chapters 18/19) God did not demand more prayer or action but just let him 'be'. Let's not pretend to be superhuman but let's be aware of God's love and compassion. When it says "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." (Mark 12:31) remember that if we can't love ourselves then we'll make a poor show of loving others. We are called to love our neighbour (hospitality or food provision) but showing ourselves love can be more difficult.

Now what about Bartimaeus? He knew how to love himself. He'd been told that a certain person was about and knew what Jesus was capable of so he cried out despite those around him, trying to get him to shut up. Jesus responded with compassion as he had when the crowds had been following them previously and they had needed a rest. His response was immediate. He engaged with the situation: 'Call him to me'.

There was commitment. What do we know about commitment? Fire Fighters need to respond to a series of situations during the day but they also need to return to base to get refreshed. However small or brief our time apart is we can rely on God to give us the energy to respond to each challenge with compassion. We can be ready to respond to whatever happens because we are refreshed by spending time with God. If we have an ongoing base of prayer, self-knowledge and compassion we will be able to live with a generosity of spirit. If we care for ourselves then we'll be able to be hospitable and generous to those around us. Commitment grows out of compassion because of the balance that our relationship with God brings.

Where then does this passage from Amos fit in. Is it saying that our church services are useless? No! It's telling us that there needs to be that balance in what we do. We can't hide behind religiosity and not engage with society but our worship of God must mean we care for the poor, we act in a fair, just and responsible way. As we learn more about our faith, we are enabled by the Spirit to do greater things. Let's be aware of the places and possibilities for practising generosity for showing hospitality. Let that be part of our worship. Let us learn how to care for ourselves, which will enable us to take care of others then our actions will speak louder than our words.

As we grow in our relationship with God, our thoughts and actions should express the compassion that we have received, through the commitment we demonstrate, to reveal consideration and care for all.

Hymn: StF 693 'Beauty for Brokenness'

Beauty for brokenness
Hope for despair
Lord in the suffering
This is our prayer
Bread for the children
Justice Joy Peace
Sunrise to sunset
Your Kingdom increase

Shelter for fragile lives
Cures for their ills
Work for the craftsman
Trade for their skills
Land for the dispossessed
Rights for the weak
Voices to plead the cause
Of those who can't speak

*God of the poor
Friend of the weak
Give us compassion we pray
Melt our cold hearts
Let tears fall like rain
Come, change our love
From a spark to a flame*

Refuge from cruel wars
Havens from fear
Cities for sanctuary
Freedoms to share
Peace to the killing-fields
Scorched earth to green
Christ for the bitterness
His cross for the pain

God of the poor ...

Rest for the ravaged earth
Oceans and streams
Plundered and poisoned
Our future, our dreams
Lord, end our madness
Carelessness, greed
Make us content with
The things that we need

Lighten our darkness
Breathe on this flame
Until your justice burns
Brightly again
Until the nations
Learn of Your ways
Seek Your salvation
And bring You their praise

God of the poor...

Intercessions:

God, you know each one of us inside out. Your grace forgives us making us whole. We ask your light to shine on those who are exploited who ask, 'why is life like this?' Enable them to find purpose and strength in their hardship. For those whose potential is being robbed by human greed. May they be re-assured of your care. Give us your wisdom to see through our confusion. Enable us to know your justice. You are the friend who shows us life in its fullness. Help us to realise that we need you. : Show us how to live: in fairness and with integrity. Show us how we need to change. Where injustice creates inequality may your love expose these things. Make us aware of the part we play. Thank you for your generous love. In your forgiveness may things be set right. Amen.

LET FAIRNESS FLOW

Lord God, you call us to be beacons of compassion for the global community. Enable us to share in the joys, hopes and grief of all people. Make politicians aware of the vulnerable so that just decisions are taken, that respect the integrity of us all and care for the earth. God bring comfort, and future hope for all around the world who are affected by droughts, storms and floods: Show us how to stand alongside those in the local community who are afflicted and live differently. Almighty God give us a vision of our world as your love would make it: A world where the weak are protected. A world where none go hungry or suffer poverty. A world where all races and cultures

live in tolerance and mutual respect. Inspire us and give us courage to build a world guided by love where peace is built with justice in the power and presence of Jesus Christ our Lord. We take your hand Lord, give us grace to follow in difficult situations and through conflict as we serve you in faithfulness.

MAY YOUR FOOTSTEPS GUIDE US IN ALL THAT WE DO, LORD. MAY IT BE IN YOUR FOOTSTEPS THAT WE PLACE OUR FEET

Blessing:

Peace brought by Christ

Let God surround us with peace,

In the midst of great storms let us know safety in God whose lighthouse shines gently down.

God behind us with waves to cleanse, to sweep away hurt.

God beneath us for us to tread in grace wherever we're led.

God beside us walking hand in hand, filling our minds with new colours and plans.

God within us, restoring our souls. Amen