



Sunday February 5th
A service of worship for use at home
Prepared by Jan Davies

Theme: Jesus – a man of words, prayer and action

Call to worship: The LORD is the everlasting God;
He created all the world.
He never grows tired or weary.
No one understands His thoughts.
He strengthens those who are weak and tired.

Hymn: To be in your presence

To be in your presence, to sit at your feet,
Where your love surrounds me,
And makes me complete:

*Chorus: This my desire, O Lord,
This is my desire.
This is my desire, O Lord,
This is my desire*

To rest in your presence, not rushing away,
To cherish each moment –
Here I would stay.

Chorus

Prayers: Adoration and Praise

Blessed are you, Lord our God
Your light shines in the darkness of an evil world,
And has never been extinguished.

Praise be to you, Lord God.

Blessed are you, mighty, creator God.
We glimpse your creative energy
In the magnificence and wonder, the colour and beauty,
Of the created universe,
And the minute detail of the living cell or the new born child.

Praise be to you, Creator God.

Blessed are you, Lord Jesus Christ.
Who welcomed the little child,
Who touched the leper and healed the blind.
We see your hands stretched out in love on a cross.
Our lives are bound to you for eternity
In your resurrection life.

Praise be to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed are you, Spirit of the living God.
You inflame the hearts of those who love you.
You inspire our worship.

You guide us in the path that leads to life.
You bring healing and wholeness to a broken world.
Praise be to you Spirit of the Living God. AMEN

Readings: Mark 1:29-39 (lectionary reading for second service)

Jesus and his disciples, including James and John, left the synagogue and went straight to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was sick in bed with a fever, and as soon as Jesus arrived, He was told about her. He went to her and took her by the hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

After the sun had set and the evening had come, people brought to Jesus all the sick and those who had demons. All the people of the town gathered in front of the house. Jesus healed many who were sick with all kinds of diseases and drove out many demons. He would not let the demons say anything because they knew who He was.

Very early the next morning, long before daylight, Jesus got up and left the house. He went out of the town to a lonely place, where he prayed. But Simon and his companions went out searching for Him, when they found Him they said "Everyone is looking for you."

But Jesus answered, "We must go on to other villages round here. I have to preach in them also, because that is why I came."

So He travelled all over Galilee, preaching in the synagogues and driving out demons.

Hymn: I heard the voice of Jesus say

I heard the voice of Jesus say: 'Come unto me and rest;
Lay down, O weary one lay down your head upon my breast.'
I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad,
I found in Him a resting-place, and he has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say: 'Behold, I freely give
The living water; thirsty one, stoop down and drink and live.'
I came to Jesus and I drank of that life giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in Him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say: 'I am this dark world's Light;
Look unto me, your morn shall rise, and all your day be bright.'
I looked to Jesus, and I found in Him my star my sun;
And in that light of life I'll walk, till travelling days are done.

Sermon

Intro: have you ever noticed that people like to put other people in boxes? We categorise people by the jobs they do; cleaners, for example, are not as important as professional people.

Some people **think** that they are more important than others. In hospitals for example, some doctors think that they are so much more important than others. Or when I was in college there was an impression that secondary school teachers were more important than primary school teachers.

This can also be true of churches – much to our shame! We may value ministers more than the person who serves coffee. We like to categorise people by giving them titles; evangelicals, fundamentalists, charismatic's, liberals, people of prayer or people of action, those who evangelise and those who care for the needs of others.

If we are not careful, we can look down on those who are not the same as us.

Jesus shows us that people are more important than the boxes we put them in and that no form of service is more important than any other.

Illustration: A story is told of someone who went to college. During the second month a professor gave them a test. She breezed through all the questions until she came to the last one which said 'What is the first name of the woman who cleans the classroom?' Surely it was some kind of a joke. Everyone knew she was tall, dark haired and in her 50s – but how were they to know her name? At the end of the test, one student asked if the last question was a joke. But the professor said, 'absolutely not. During your careers, you will meet many people. What you need to learn is that everyone is important, not matter what they do.' It is a lesson none of them forgot. They discovered that her name was Dorothy!

A man of word, prayer and action: We know that Jesus was a preacher. He says that He was here to preach the Good News – that was what He came to do. We read that "He went all over Galilee, preaching the Good News." That must have taken months of very hard work.

But that is not the only thing He came to do. Just because He was a preacher, that didn't mean He didn't care for people's physical needs. In the reading from Mark we hear that, not only did He heal Peter's mother –in-law but He healed "many who were sick with all kinds of diseases and drove out many demons." We find Him, not only healing the sick, but answering many questions – caring for those who were in need and had doubts and questions.

And we know that this took it out of Him. Think of the healing of the woman who had a haemorrhage for twelve years. She had simply touched the hem of His garment, thinking that she could get healing without drawing attention to herself and she thought she had got away with it. But, Jesus was aware of some power going out of Him, even though He was surrounded by a crowd.

Illustration: We are told of a student who brought everything that he needed to a lecture, but then sat down and went to sleep! It seemed that he cared for the physical but he didn't listen to the words that were said.

Jesus never separated the soul from the body: In my early, fundamentalist days, I remember that we sneered at people from mainstream churches who concentrated on what we called 'the social gospel' – looking after the body and forgetting the souls. After all, we thought that saving souls what Christians were all about. How arrogant is that! We obviously valued preachers more that we valued someone looking after a disabled person.

On the other hand, other people sneered at us because we were 'so heavenly minded that we were no earthly good'. What neither groups realised at the time was that it wasn't a question of one or the other, but both.

Things have moved on since those days and now there is a recognition that we are called to redeem the whole person not just save souls. Jesus reached out to all people in need. He felt compassion for the weak, the lost and the sick. And..... He had a message to proclaim.

It seems to me that we have come full circle. In mainstream churches instead of concentrating on saving peoples' souls and ignoring their physical needs we are now comfortable to visit the sick, care for the marginalised and the poor but less comfortable to speak about our faith in the hope of winning people to Christ – somehow, caring for the souls of people we meet seems less important. For Jesus, the difference did not exist and they should not for us.

Jesus did not separate spiritual and earthly: I wonder if you have heard people say "I'll pray about that situation" but are not prepared to take practical action.

Illustration: There was an elderly lady who had amassed a small fortune. She never missed a prayer meeting, Bible study or service of worship but was horrified at the suggestion that she might give some of her money to those in need!

She obviously hadn't taken seriously what William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, had said "You cannot try to save a man's soul and leave him starving."

But, there are also people who are so busy with their work in the church and the world that they don't find time to pray.

Illustration: Before lockdown, I attended a fellowship group. Of the 12 people who were there, only three people admitted that they had a regular prayer life but all were heavily involved in work in the church and community! Is it any wonder that the church is in decline?

Jesus knew that, without a deep relationship with His Heavenly Father, He would not have the strength to continue the preaching and healing work that took so much of His time. In the passage that we read it says "Very early next morning, long before daylight, Jesus got up and left the house. He went out of the town to a lonely place, where He prayed." Jesus knew the value of prayer to keep Him on the right track. If it was true for Jesus, then it must be true for us.

To sum up: Jesus showed us that should not put people in boxes and value some people more than others. We need to care for the body and the soul; we must care for those in need as well as being prepared to speak openly about our faith. But it is so important to be regular in our prayer life if we wish to serve God.

Of course, we cannot do everything! But, the church as a whole should reflect all that Jesus did. And we need to realise that no one person is more valuable than another – however they choose to do to serve God.

One more thought: When we are elderly and infirm (as I am!) we may not be able to do as much as we had previously. But, the one thing that we have got is time. Let us use that time in prayer. We can use that time to pray for those who are more active. It maybe that God can use us in a way that was impossible when we were so frantically busy.

Prayers of Confession:

Lord, there are times when the light we hold grows dim.

We are sorry for those times when we put people in boxes,
Or value some more than others.

Show us how we can follow Jesus and become people of action, prayer and words.

Whatever our calling, may we never neglect our prayer life.

And when we fail you, please forgive us.

For we know that you are always ready to forgive, if we admit our failings and for this we thank you. Amen

Hymn: God is love, His the care

God is love, His the care, tending each everywhere.

God is love, all is there!

Jesus came to show Him, that we all might know Him.

Chorus: Sing aloud, loud, loud!

Sing aloud, loud, loud!

God is good! God is truth!

God is beauty! Praise Him!

None can see God above; neighbours here we can love;

Thus may we Godward move,

Finding Him in others, sisters all and brothers:

Chorus:

Jesus came, lived and died for our sake, crucified,
Rose again, glorified;
He was born to save us by the truth He gave us:
Chorus:

To our Lord praise we sing – light and life, friend and King,
Coming down love to bring,
Pattern for our duty, showing God in beauty:
Chorus:

Prayers of Intercession (using the words of ‘Make me a channel of your peace)

Lord, you said, “My peace I leave you”.
In a world of violence, pain and mistrust:
Make us channels of your peace.

We bring to you Lord, the troubles of the world:
(We pray for places of conflict, for those affected by climate change and those people troubled by the cost of living crisis)
Lord Jesus
Where there is hatred, bring your love.

We bring to you Lord, broken relationships and mistrust in the world:
(We pray for governments, religious and political leaders, and all those who make decisions on behalf of others)
Lord Jesus
Where there is injury, bring your pardon.

We bring to you Lord the Church, both here and throughout the world:
(We pray for the coming of God’s Kingdom, for those who seek and those who guide, for those who are persecuted and those who live in fear)
Lord Jesus
Where there is doubt, bring true faith.

We bring to you Lord, all human sorrow:
(We pray for the sick and bereaved, the lonely and the anxious)
Lord Jesus
Where there is sadness, bring your joy.

We bring to you Lord, ourselves, our trials and temptations:
(In silence, we pray for ourselves)
Lord Jesus
**May we be channels of your peace and love. In the name of Jesus:
AMEN**

Hymn: Now thank we all our God.

Now thank we all our God, with hearts and hands and voices,
Who, wondrous things has done, in whom this world rejoices;
Who, from our mothers’ arms has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in His grace, and guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills in this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God the father now be given,
The Son and Him who reigns with them in highest heaven,
The one eternal God, whom earth and heaven adore,
For thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore.

Blessing

Loving Lord,

We know you and see you in Jesus:

So come to us in friendship, and walk with us along the way.

When that pathway is rocky and uphill, strengthen us.

In all circumstances, give us eyes and ears that are open to others,

So that we may be for them instruments of your purpose,

Sharing faith, encouragement and love. AMEN