



The Methodist Church

Nottingham North East Circuit - Sunday 23rd July 2023



This short act of worship has been prepared for you by Rev John Wiseman 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. Internet links are provided for the songs.

Let's begin by singing together STF 678 .

Come, all who look to Christ today,
Stretch out your hands, enlarge your mind,
Together share his living way
Where all who humbly seek will find.

Come, all who will from every race;
Find here new powers of brotherhood,
Accept the Spirit's strong embrace
Which binds us to the common good.

Come, young and old from every church,
Bring all your treasures of prayer,
Join the dynamic Spirit's search
To press beyond the truths we share.

Bring your traditions' richest store,
Your hymns and rites
and cherished creeds;
Explore our visions, pray for more,
Since God delights to meet fresh needs.

Come, trust in Christ and live in peace,
Anticipate that final light
When strife and bigotry shall cease,
And faith be lost in praise and sight.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=LuVZs6uF9uM

Opening Prayer: Psalm 150

Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens.
² Praise him for his acts of power;

praise him for his surpassing greatness.
³ Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,
praise him with the harp and lyre,
⁴ praise him with timbrel and dancing,
praise him with the strings and pipe,
⁵ praise him with the clash of cymbals,
praise him with resounding cymbals.
⁶ **Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.**

Bible reading Luke 4:16-24

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the
captives and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' ²² All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, '**Is not this Joseph's son?**'

²³ He said to them, 'Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, "Doctor, cure yourself!" And you will say, "Do here also in your home town the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" ²⁴ And he said, 'Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's home town.

Let us continue to worship by joining together to sing STF 685

In Christ there is no east or west,
in him no south or north,
but one great fellowship of love
throughout the whole wide earth.

In Christ shall true hearts ev'rywhere
their high communion find.
His service is the golden cord
close binding humankind.

Join hands, then, people of the faith,
whate'er your race may be.
All children of the living God
are surely kin to me.

In Christ now meet both east and west,
in him meet south and north.
All Christ like souls are joined as one
throughout the whole wide earth.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yaYRwU1z_E&t=3s

Today's Message

I wonder if you have ever thought about how labels can be used for different purposes? They can be used to help **identify** an item, something that is very evident when standing in an airport arrivals lounge you suddenly realise that you didn't put a label on your black suitcase to help you identify it from the other 250 almost identical suitcase that are coming towards you on the revolving carousel

Labels can tell you what's **inside** something as I discovered when I first headed off to Cardiff University aged 18. Worried about how I might cope my parent had managed to obtain 6 very large boxes, full of an assortment of edible goodies from the local Heinz factory. These world renowned delicacies are sold at a reduced price for one simple reason...they

come without any outside packaging on the tin i.e. no labels. That was not a real problem because they came with a corresponding list explaining all the different codes on the tins, except in my case there was no list. As a result my flat mates and I had no idea what was inside each time and our tea time meals became a complete lottery as to what we would eat...chocolate sponge with chicken soup instead of custard being a particular favourite.

Labels can also provide **information**. We have all seen people in our supermarkets engaged in a mobile phone conversation with another party, trying to work out which precise product they have been sent to buy based on what the label says. Should they buy orange juice with pulp or smooth? Should they buy tomatoes with best before or use by date? Should they buy the one with 35% non saturated poly fibre glutprotohydrates or the one with reduced sugar?

What would we do without labels! Labels that give us information, labels that tell us what something is, what something contains or what something does. All of them proving very helpful.

And yet we can often use labels in a harmful way with the people we meet. We can at times label them in order to try to define them by gender, social class, economic and financial status, political view, gender, age, sexual orientation or religious views to name just a few.

By labelling them we try to put people into nice neat boxes. And although those labels can be removed and changed depending on circumstances, on occasions those labels can become permanent and in doing do become **life limiting**.

This time of year I suspect many of us will have been glued to the TV screen watching the final of the men's singles competition at Wimbledon. And for many years the focus of the nation's attention has been how well would Andy Murray do.

Should Andy Murray win he will be instantly labelled as "the best thing since sliced bread" and the newspaper headlines and bulletins will

undoubtedly begin with the words ...History was made today as **British** tennis player Andy Murray.

Should Andy Murray happen to lose then the same newspapers will be quick to label him a chocker, label him not good enough, label him the nearly man and those same newspaper headlines and bulletins will almost certainly start with....defeat for **Scottish** tennis player Andy Murray

And it is interesting how the change of one single letter can make a world of difference, transforming Andy Murray from a **Champ** to a **Chump**

In the reading we heard from Luke's gospel today Jesus becomes victim to this idea of people wanting to label him. The people gathered round hear the words that he says, words that are filled with power, words that have authority, words that cut through to the heart of the issue at hand. They all hear him and we read that initially they all spoke well of him and were amazed by his gracious words. And yet in the very next sentence we hear this "**But isn't this Joseph's son?**"

Despite what they see with their own eyes, despite what they hear with their own ears, despite what they feel with their own hearts, the crowd gathered in Jesus' hometown synagogue are all too quick to dismiss the evidence right in front of them and place a label on Jesus based on his parents, his birth, his siblings and his upbringing.

A label which limits who they can accept Jesus to be and also what he might be able to do with them and for them.

The people gathered in the synagogue encountered a Jesus they thought they knew and quickly stuck a label on him in order to confine him to a neat little box. My question for us today is who and how do we label and thus restrict people we encounter today?

Jesus spent a large part of his ministry **removing labels** from people. He removed the label from Peter, Andrew, James and John which limited their role to being simple minded fishermen and instead opened up the possibility that they could become fishers of

men, founding participants in a movement that would change the world through their teachings, writings and leadership.

Jesus not only cast out seven spirits from Mary Magdalene, a situations which had labelled her as being possessed by the devil, but then included her alongside other marginalised women in his inner group of disciples, women who provided valuable support during Jesus itinerant ministry

Jesus removes the social stigma or label from Matthew of being a tax collector, an occupation that was hated amongst his fellow Jews as it implied conspiracy and cooperation with the occupying Roman forces

Jesus removes the labels and the social exclusion from those suffering from leprosy, those who are crippled, those who are handicapped, those who are blind, deaf, dumb or simply daft.

Jesus encounters a women brought before him by the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, people who themselves tried to hide their true self behind superficial external labels. This women has been caught in the act of adultery....quite why the man who must have been her partner in this act is also not presented before Jesus remains a mystery.

But Jesus refuses to label and limit this woman by what she has done, by what she is doing, but instead tears of that label of adulteress, or prostitute or whore...and offers her the chance of a new start, a new beginning, a new life in and through faith in him..

Jesus refuses to see the labels that have been attached to people, labels that would brand them as possessed / traitor / simple minded / handicapped / unclean / outsider and instead simply rebrands them, re packages them, re identifies them, **re labels** them.

He re labels them as people created in God's image, as children of God, as beloved sons and daughters of the Father,

So my final thought for this morning is when we encounter others, whether they be friends or strangers, how do we limit them as people, by the boxes we try to restrict them too, by the

stereotypes we enforce and by the labels we seek to attach.

Perhaps this morning we would do well to remember that labels are for suitcases not for people. Amen

Prayers of intercession

Pray for the events' situations and people that have dominated our news bulletins over the past 7 days

Pray for anyone you know who has been unjustly labelled by society

Pray for the ways that you and your church can help to remove these labels

Pray for the ways that you and your church can help to remind people that they are beloved sons and daughters of God

Pray for those that you know are in need of God's grace and comfort today

We are going to finish with what I hope is a familiar favourite

I want to walk with Jesus Christ,
all the days I live of this life on earth;
to give to Him complete control
of body and of soul.
*Follow Him, follow Him,
yield your life to Him -
He has conquered death,
He is King of kings;
accept the joy which He gives to those
who yield their lives to Him.*

I want to learn to speak to Him,
to pray to Him, confess my sin,
to open my life and let Him in,
for joy will then be mine.
Follow Him, follow Him.....

I want to learn to speak of Him –
my life must show that He lives in me;
my deeds, my thoughts, my words must speak
all of His love for me.
Follow Him, follow Him....

I want to learn to read His word,
for this is how I know the way
to live my life as pleases Him,
in holiness and joy.
Follow Him, follow Him....

O Holy Spirit of the Lord,
enter now into this heart of mine;
take full control of my selfish will
and make me wholly Thine!
Follow Him, follow Him....

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www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQOJ2sEa1z0

Blessing

As we plan for the week ahead, may the breathe of God animate our being and our doing, our giving and receiving, our taking and offering, our sowing and our reaping. Amen