

**East Durham Methodist Circuit:**  
**On-line Service for 25<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

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**Theme: The marks of a Disciple**

**Call to worship:**

Shout for joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious. Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you. All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you, they sing the praises of your name.

**Hymn: Born in song**

Brian Hoare

**StF 21 / H&P 486**

1. Born in song!  
God's people have always been singing.  
Born in song!  
Hearts and voices raised.  
So today we worship together;  
God alone is worthy to be praised.

2. Praise to God!  
For he is the one who has made us.  
Praise to God!  
We his image bear.  
Heaven and earth are full of his glory;  
let creation praise him everywhere.

3. Christ is King!  
He left all the glory of heaven.  
Christ is King!  
Born to share in our pain;  
crucified, for sinners atoning,  
risen, exalted, soon to come again.

4. Sing the song!  
God's Spirit is poured out among us.  
Sing the song!  
He has made us anew.  
Every member part of the Body;  
given his power, his will to seek and do.

5. Tell the world!  
All power to Jesus is given.  
Tell the world!  
He is with us always.  
Spread the word, that all may receive  
him;  
every tongue confess and sing his  
praise.

6. Then the end!  
Christ Jesus shall reign in his glory.  
Then the end  
of all earthly days.  
Yet above the song will continue;  
all his people still shall sing his praise.

**Prayers of adoration, confession and thanksgiving:**

Heavenly Father, I bow before you in worship and I praise your name because of your unfailing love.

You are faithful in all your promises, and you always keep your word.  
You are trustworthy and your promises preserve my life.  
Your word gives me life, and it is a light for my path in life.  
I praise you for your beautiful words that are soothing to the soul.

You asked for my hands, that you might use them for your purpose.  
I gave them for a moment, then withdrew them, for the work was hard.

You asked for my mouth to speak out against injustice.  
I gave you a whisper that I might not be accused.

You asked for my eyes to see the pain of poverty.  
I closed them, for I did not want to see.

You asked for my life, that you might work through me.  
I gave a small part, that I might not get too involved.

Lord, forgive my calculated efforts to serve you, only when it is convenient for me to do so, only in those places where it is safe to do so, and only with those who make it easy to do so. Father, forgive me, renew me, send me out as a usable instrument, that I might take seriously the meaning of your cross.

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you most humble and hearty thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness.

We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And give us, we pray, such a sense of all your mercies that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days.

In Jesus' name we pray

**Amen**

Let us now say **The Lord's Prayer** together:

**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**

**Reading: 2 Timothy 3:10-17** New International Version

<sup>10</sup> You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, <sup>11</sup> persecutions, sufferings - what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.

<sup>12</sup> In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, <sup>13</sup> while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. <sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, <sup>15</sup> and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

**Hymn:** **We have a gospel to proclaim.** Edward Joseph Burns **StF418 / H&P 465**

1. We have a gospel to proclaim,  
Good news for men in all the earth;  
The gospel of a Saviour's name,  
We sing His glory, tell His worth.

2. Tell of His birth at Bethlehem,  
Not in a royal house or hall  
But in a stable dark and dim,  
The Word made flesh, a light for all.

3. Tell of His death at Calvary,  
Hated by those He came to save,  
In lonely suffering on the cross,  
For all He loved His life He gave.

4. Tell of that glorious Easter moon,  
Empty the tomb, for He was free.  
He broke the power of death and hell  
That we might share His victory.

5. Tell of His reign at God's right hand,  
By all creation glorified,  
He sends His Spirit on His Church,  
To live for Him, the Lamb who died.

6. Now we rejoice to name Him King,  
Jesus is Lord of all the earth,  
This gospel message we proclaim,  
We sing His glory, tell His worth.

**Reading:** **Mark 10: 35 - 45** New International Version

<sup>35</sup> Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." <sup>36</sup> "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. <sup>37</sup> They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

<sup>38</sup> "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" <sup>39</sup> "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, <sup>40</sup> but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

<sup>41</sup> When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. <sup>42</sup> Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

**Message:**

In the church at the moment a lot of resources are being expended on reminding us of discipleship. It is not only core to our Wesleyan heritage but the foundation of the Christian Church. Jesus chose disciples to make disciples and He still is doing that. So it is great to know that we are loved and accepted by God, that through faith in Jesus' person and ministry we have a place in heaven and the guarantee of that we have through the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

It is really good to know that, but it is lost if we keep it to ourselves - like the servant in the story Jesus told of the Master going away and leaving his servants with some of his wealth to look after. Two invested it and gave him an increase but the lazy servant buried it thinking it was wise to keep it safe. So this morning I want to lay a foundation for a series on Discipleship by looking at '**The marks of a Disciple**'.

Our bible readings show a good and a bad example of discipleship. Paul is encouraging Timothy to step up to the plate by looking at his good example and that of Timothy's mother and grandmother. They were all committed to their faith even when it brought suffering, but God had rescued them and Paul points to the scriptures to understand how God has worked throughout history.

The good example is contrasted with the bad, selfish example of James and John the brothers. They wanted to be closest to Jesus in the coming Kingdom. They may have got there but it wasn't for Jesus to give. Their role was to serve - not wanting reward or out of any self-interest.

What then are '**The marks of a Disciple?**' I am going to highlight five, so it will only be a whistle stop tour at each. There is however no reason why you cannot keep on exploring it for yourself. For each mark ask the questions **What does this mean for me? How am I working this out in my life in the world?**

I was thinking of people who measure their children on the doorposts of their houses to see how they have grown. The children have just grown naturally - not forced or trained to do so - and each mark records development. So it is with the marks of a disciple; we need to allow them to grow in us.

The first to consider is **Faith**. A disciple lives by trusting in Jesus, the Son of God. **"And without faith it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."** Hebrews 11:6

So, the way to please God is to believe that Jesus exists and comes to all who would believe in Him. That is not complicated but sometimes it is hard for people to grasp. Mostly that's because of the wrong view we have of Him. Like James and John who thought Jesus was interested in hierarchy and position.

Some may ask what a teacher that lived 2,000 years ago has to do with the world today. Who we are believing in and what He did when He was on earth is life changing!

That therefore is the place to put our faith: Jesus died for us to give us life.

The second to consider is **Love**, a disciple lives in love. **"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself."** Mark 12:30-31.

The call is to an all-encompassing love for God and to those we share the world with.

Jesus says in another place that we even have to love our enemies. It is really empowering to know that someone loves us, but to know it is the One who created us and understands the full potential of that love, then it is something else.

Jean Vanier said, "Love is the greatest risk... the giving of myself. But dare I take this risk, diving into the swirling waters of loving fidelity? God was willing to take the risk for you, He is faithful, and the disciple needs to be willing to take risk for Him and the world.

To misquote John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He called Alf, called you, to tell of and share His love that none should perish but all receive eternal life. Alice Cary said, "He who loves his fellow man is loving God the best he can." Christian love is a large topic but it simply just needs to be lived, given and received.

Thirdly the disciple is marked by Service, a disciple gets involved in the work of God. **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”** Mark10:45.

Disciples are not clones of each other, we are all different in lots of ways, be that our looks or interests or skills, the way we speak, our characters, our stories. You might say "thank goodness for that, I wouldn't want to be like you Alf."

We are called to use who we are to be involved in God's Mission. For some of us we are doing God's work in our chosen professions in the world of work or through our hobbies. Others choose to serve God through the church or some volunteering. If you do not know what that is, speak to someone about it or cover it in prayer. I know of someone who never goes on a bus or a train without speaking to some stranger about Jesus.

It took three years and more for James and John to realise that they were to serve not be served as they walked in the footsteps of their master. John served Jesus into old age, but James served Jesus through martyrdom, the second martyr recorded in the early church. It was just 17 years from his call from the fishing boat to his death.

The fourth mark to consider is **Holiness**, a disciple is called to be Christlike. **“My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you.”** Galatians 4:19.

A disciple is filled with Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God has many roles. One of them is to make us more like Jesus. Jesus' life on earth was that of a perfect human being, hence He was able to be the perfect sacrifice when He went to the cross. Studying the Gospels, we can see what His life was like and seek to model it, but we will fail in our own strength. It isn't just what we see on the outside, it is our inner life as well that is important and it is the Holy Spirit that can, if we allow Him to, transform all of us.

In Galatians Paul is concerned for the church they are told lies that is taking them away from the truth. He tries to persuade them differently and his prayers are so deep that he describes it as being in the pains of childbirth until they return to Christ. That is how important it is. Holiness is not just about keeping rules but living the life of Christ in all our thoughts and actions.

The final mark I want to mention is that of **Knowledge**, a disciple is a learner. The first disciples had Jesus to teach, guide and support them. We are not left alone we have the Holy Spirit but also the word of God. **“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”** 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

We can use the scriptures to shape us and inform us. The Bible is the story of God's interaction in His creation and with those who believe in Him. It is a living word and so can speak into situations. I remember once being at odds with some friends - and the scriptures spoke to me about forgiveness.

Another time I was wondering about my future, what I was going to do next, and He spoke to me through the book of Esther. When I used to travel around training churches in mission skills, I did not teach my ideas or concoct a manual, I was guided by scripture verses. I was amazed watching the Connexional treasurer present next year's budget how he set it in the story of the Feeding of the 5,000. He used it to point to principles not just as proof texts. If you do not know what to do or say, prayerfully seek God in the scriptures for insight. Note Paul says 'All Scripture is God breathed' not just the New

Testament but the Old Testament too. Not just proof texts but the whole sweep of the Bible.

I realise we could have spent time just on one of these marks (that can be for another time) but I wanted to give you more of a depth of understanding into what a disciple is so you can ask yourself those earlier questions: **What does this mean for me? How am I working this out in my life in the world?** so that we might continue to grow in thankfulness and faithfulness to God. **Amen.**

**Hymn:**        **Will you come and follow me**    John Bell and Graham Maule    **StF 673**

1. Will you come and follow me if I but  
call your name?

Will you go where you don't know and  
never be the same?

Will you let my love be shown?

Will you let my name be known?

Will you let my life be grown in you,  
and you in me?

2. Will you leave yourself behind if I but  
call your name?

Will you care for cruel and kind and  
never be the same?

Will you risk the hostile stare,  
should your life attract or scare?

Will you let me answer prayer in you  
and you in me?

3. Will you let the blinded man see if I  
but call your name?

Will you set the prisoners free and never  
be the same?

Will you kiss the leper clean,

and do such as this unseen?

And admit to what I mean in you,  
and you in me?

4. Will you love the "you" you hide if I  
but call your name?

Will you quell that fear inside and never  
be the same?

Will you use the faith you've found  
to reshape the world around  
through my sight and touch and sound  
in you,  
and you in me?

5. Lord, your summons echoes true  
when you but call my name.

Let me turn and follow you and never be  
the same.

In your company I'll go,  
where your love and footsteps show,  
thus I'll move and live and grow in you,  
and you in me.

ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh

### **Intercessions:**

In humility and love, let us pray together to the God of our making and redeeming.

That all Christians may fulfil their vocation to be servants, caring for the needs of others, obedient to their Lord in all things and supportive of one another in worship, prayer and deepening faith.

Silence

Into your hands, O Lord: **we commit our prayers.**

That those who govern and advise may seek out God's will and the good of all in each crisis, dilemma and debate.

Silence

Into your hands, O Lord: **we commit our prayers.**

That we may develop the habit of rejoicing in the opportunities to serve, and to put ourselves out for others, laying down our craving for praise and importance.

Silence

Into your hands, O Lord: **we commit our prayers.**

That those who suffer in mind, body and spirit may sense the Christ close beside them, knowing his healing and resting in his love.

Silence

Into your hands, O Lord: **we commit our prayers.**

That those who have died in faith may be welcomed into the light of heaven, and that all who are walking in sin today may turn away from evil and live.

Silence

Into your hands, O Lord: **we commit our prayers.**

We thank you, Lord God, for the long-suffering patience with us, and the affectionate forgiveness which lifts us to our feet whenever we stumble.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

**Amen**

**Hymn: Go forth and tell! O church of God, awake!** James Seddon **H&P 770**

1. Go forth and tell! O church of God,  
awake!  
God's saving news to all the nations  
take;  
proclaim Christ Jesus, saviour, Lord,  
and king,  
that all the world his worthy praise may  
sing.

2. Go forth and tell! God's love  
embraces all;  
he will in grace respond to all who call:  
how shall they call if they have never  
heard  
the gracious invitation of his word?

3. Go forth and tell where still the  
darkness lies;  
in wealth or want, the sinner surely dies:  
give us, O Lord, concern of heart and  
mind,

a love like yours which cares for all  
mankind.

4. Go forth and tell! The doors are open  
wide:  
share God's good gifts let no one be  
denied;  
live out your life as Christ your Lord  
shall choose,  
your ransomed powers for his sole glory  
use.

5. Go forth and tell! O church of God,  
arise!  
go in the strength which Christ your Lord  
supplies;  
go till all nations his great name adore  
and serve him, Lord and king for  
evermore

**Blessing:**

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore.