

East Durham Methodist Circuit:
On-line Service for Mother's Day 14th March 2021

compiled by Rev Dawn Brown and Bill Naylor
Readers: Graeme and Stella Walton

Theme: Look Up

Call to worship:

Good morning and welcome to our time of worship together. We will be exploring our need to 'Look Up' and how trusting in God can help us with that.

But let's not forget that today is also the special day each year when we remember our Mothers who brought us into the world and in so doing may we be reminded of our daily need to praise and thank God for all He has done for us. For His healing and His grace and for His gift of Life itself, made freely available to everyone who asks for it through the sacrifice of His only Son, Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Hymn:

Be Lifted Up Paul Baloche

Be lifted up, be lifted up
As we bow down, be lifted up

Let the heavens rejoice
Let the nations be glad
Let the whole earth tremble
For You are God
Come and worship the Lord
In the beauty of holiness

As we bow down, be lifted up **Repeat**

Prayers of Praise, Confession and Thanksgiving:

Dear Lord, you are the God of Up! We look to You. We look up to You, our God of hope, our God of salvation and ... **We praise Your Holy Name**

We know that all that we have and all that we are, comes from you Father God. You are our Creator, the God of Heaven and Earth. We know that You love us without reservation and ... **We praise Your Holy Name**

Yet we consistently fail You.

And so we bow down and confess:

Confess that so often we stray from You and follow our own path rather than seeking guidance from You and finding our purpose with You. **Forgive us Lord**

We confess that we often seek human approval over Your approval. **Forgive us Lord**

We confess that so often, it's all about us. That we pursue our own desires, pursue petty disputes among ourselves and being unforgiving of others and that in pursuing the god of self gratification, we deny our help to those in need.

For these, our sins of commission and omission:

Forgive us Lord

And now we give You thanks for all Your wonderful gifts to us. For love and care and on this special day when we think specifically of our Mothers, we remember and thank You for the wonderful things of the Nature You created.

Dwell on this daffodil image and give thanks to the Lord for your Mum, and in addition for every good, every joyous thing that Your good Earth produces to both feed and Lift us Up:



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****

Reflection: Daffodils Bill Naylor

Daffodils! Aren't they wonderful? They stand at the gateway of the gardening year, signals of a New Start, promising that cold winter days are almost behind us. Wordsworth famously wrote about them and we often give them to Mum on Mother's Day. Why - because they Lift us Up! We've just asked God to "**Give us this day our daily bread**" well Daffodils feed our emotions. They're great mental therapy. Here's how Mr W. finishes his poem:

I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,

And dances with the daffodils.

I'm no great connoisseur of poetry but like daffodils and music, it strikes an essential chord in each one of us. It Lifts us Up!

The much loved poem **The Gate of the Year** by Minnie Louise Haskins is in fact titled **God Knows** and in effect it is saying that we need to trust God. Here it is:

THE GATE OF THE YEAR

'God Knows'

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:
"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied:

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."
So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.
And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

So heart be still: What need our little life
Our human life to know, If God hath comprehension?
In all the dizzy strife Of things both high and low,
God hideth His intention.

God knows. His will is best. The stretch of years
Which wind ahead, so dim To our imperfect vision,
Are clear to God. Our fears Are premature; In Him, All time hath full provision.

Then rest: until God moves to lift the veil
From our impatient eyes, When, as the sweeter features
Of Life's stern face we hail, Fair beyond all surmise
God's thought around His creatures Our mind shall fill.

At the start of this year or any year, what better thing for us than to Look Up and trust God?

But back to the Daffodils. When the chill winds blow, they Look Up don't they? A thought that takes us nicely into our Bible readings...

Reading: **Numbers 21:4-9** **The Bronze Snake** New International Version

⁴ They travelled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; ⁵ they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!"

⁶ Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. ⁷ The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people.

⁸ The Lord said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." ⁹ So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.

Reading:

John 3:14-21

New International Version

¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.

¹⁹ This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

Hymn: Beauty for brokenness

Graham Kendrick

1. Beauty for brokenness hope for
despair
Lord, in your suffering this is our prayer
Bread for the children justice, joy,
peace
Sunrise to sunset Your kingdom
increase!

3. 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 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**

God of the poor...

2. 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

4. 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

God of the poor...

God of the poor...

5. 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...

Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10 Made Alive in Christ New International Version

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved.

⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Message:

What have we been looking at lately? Where have you been looking and why? Lent is a journey of discovering and reflection – however, to take a journey you need to look: look around and more importantly look up. What does it mean to Look UP.

The word UP is one of the most interesting words in the English language. It is a two-letter word that perhaps has more meanings than any other two-letter word.

It's easy to understand UP, meaning toward the sky or at the top of the list, yet in the morning, we wake UP. In a meeting, a topic comes UP. And at times we speak UP.

We call UP our friends. And we use it to brighten UP a room, polish UP the silver, warm UP the leftovers and clean UP the kitchen. We lock UP the house and some guys fix UP the old car. At other times this little word has real special meaning.

People stir UP trouble, line UP for tickets, work UP an appetite, and think UP excuses. Some even dress UP. Sometimes UP can be confusing: A drain must be opened UP because it is stopped UP. We open UP a store in the morning but we close it UP at night.

We seem to be pretty mixed up about UP!

I found this on the web as an illustration :

Looking Up

Except to say this: Make up your mind that life is all about looking up.

It seems simple enough.

When things are going well, we say that “things are looking up.”

When we try to talk someone through a crisis, we say, “look up.”

When we are trying to change someone’s focus from negatives, we say “look up.”

Looking Down

Looking down conveys a totally different thought than looking up.

People look down when they feel depressed, sad or discouraged.

People look down when they feel worthless or ashamed.

People look down when they are intimidated or unable to compete.

Looking Up, can change our lives. It can lift us and have a positive effect on us, giving direction and purpose.

Let’s think of our reading for this morning – When a pole is lifted up and people look things happen and change – Don’t they?

In John 3: verses 14 and 15, Jesus says, “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”

Jesus’ words take us back to the incident you heard about in the Old Testament Reading from Numbers 21. Israel had come out of Egypt, and now they are wandering in the wilderness. The Israelites start grumbling against Moses: “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!” The Israelites are complaining, saying they would rather go back to the slavery they experienced in Egypt than to have to travel through the desert like this to get to the Promised Land. They were sick of the meals that the Lord was providing for them. Every day it was manna on the menu. Manna waffles. Manna burgers. Same old, same old, every day.

Even though the manna was sent from heaven. The Lord was providing for them, keeping them alive through the wilderness. They had to trust God to provide for them on a daily basis. They had to trust God to be faithful and to lead them eventually into the land he had promised. But the people of Israel did not fear, love, and above all trust in God. And so they grumbled. They grumbled against Moses and against God.

Grumbling against God on the way to the Promised Land? Complaining all the way. Doubting God and his promises.

Almost like Adam and Eve, in the garden, the serpent came and started tempting them to doubt God, to doubt God’s word, to doubt His goodness. You know how that turned out! Adam and Eve fell into sin. We’ve all been doing the same thing ever since.

While in the desert, doubt entered the hearts and mind of those wandering and they too fell into sin. The Lord sent poisonous snakes among them. The snakes bit them, and they began to die. But there is more to the story, thank God! The people needed to Look UP.

“Make a snake and put it up on a pole,” the Lord told Moses. “Everyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” To look to that bronze snake, lifted up on a pole, was to see and receive the salvation - God’s saving Grace. And so all who LOOKED UP were saved.

Jesus makes a remark to that very story which the people knew and says: “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.” LOOK UP and receive God’s saving Grace.

That applies to the whole world - not just the children of Israel - the whole world, which includes you and I.

In Ephesians we read that God, being rich in mercy and love, provided the way of escape, the way of salvation. Just as He did with that bronze snake, He provided the very means of their healing. Jesus Christ lifted up on the cross became the means of our healing and salvation. Yes, we were bought back to life with Christ. It’s simply receiving the gift that God gives and Looking up to Him.

Ephesians puts it like this: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God .

Yes, look UP, look UP at the cross, where our Saviour is lifted up! He is lifted up, “that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.” This is more than a snakebite we are being cured of. Death has lost it’s sting. And by Looking UP we receive eternal Life.

Jesus Christ was lifted up on the cross for us and all the other snakebit sinners of the world. Look UP to him, look Up to Jesus in faith and be saved. Believe in his name and you will have eternal life. Look UP and you will be lifted up all the way to heaven when your work on Earth is done! Looking down is not where you want to go!

Intercessions:

Feeling down? If so, In this time of quiet, these prayers are for you - but whether or not they apply to you personally, please pray them for the many people for whom they do.

Lord, so often we find ourselves looking down. Feeling down. That our lives are on a downer.

Dear Lord, lift us up!

Especially in this pandemic, when some of us are or have been ill with Covid, perhaps even losing a friend or someone close to us. Or because we cannot access treatment for another illness, injury or condition.

Dear Lord, lift us up!

And some of us are down with other things: economic things like unemployment or debt, worrying about putting a family meal on the table or keeping a roof over our heads. All leading to depression, thinking we're down and out, that maybe it's all over.

Dear Lord, lift us up!

And in a world where things are down, we pray for those put down by man's inhumanity to man through persecution ... or greed ... or racism ... or poverty ... or war

Dear Lord, lift us up!

When things look down

Dear Lord, lift us up! Amen

Hymn: All things bright and beautiful

Cecil Frances Alexander

**All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful, .
The Lord God that made them all.**

1. Each little flower that opens,
Each little bird that sings,
He made their glowing colour,
He made their tiny wings. **All things...**

2. The purple headed mountains,
The river running by,
The sunset and the morning
That brightens up the sky. **All things...**

3. The cold wind in the winter,
The pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruits in the garden,
He made them every one.

All things...

4. He gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell,
How great is the Almighty,
Who has made all things well.

All things...

Blessing:

Dear Lord, bless everyone who helps us to Look Up.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all today and for evermore. **Amen**