

East Durham Methodist Circuit:
On-line Service for 21st February 2021

compiled by Maureen Simpson and Gwyneth Walsham

Theme: "Come and see"

Call to worship:

Come joyfully before the Lord, for God knows us and loves us! Come prayerfully before the Lord, for God sees our concerns, our fears and our sins. Come hopefully before the Lord, for Christ proclaimed Gods love and forgiveness for all God's people. Know that throughout all of your being that God absolutely loves YOU,

How precious and powerful that knowledge is. Thanks be to God.

Hymn: **Open the eyes of my heart Lord** Michael W Smith **StF 451**

1. Open the eyes of my heart, Lord
Open the eyes of my heart
I want to see You
I want to see You

2. To see You high and lifted up
Shining in the light of Your glory
Pour out Your power and love
As we sing holy, holy, holy

Repeat

Prayers of Praise and Confession:

Let us pray. Let us just enjoy being in God's company.

Lord you search us and you know us. You know our personalities, our gifts and our weaknesses and that's amazing!

You are amazing, always blessing always forgiving always encouraging. And yet Lord we let you down time and time again. We don't listen to You. We do our own rituals, we try to impress people, we hold on to our own issues instead of sharing them with You. We judge people. We reject people.

Forgive us Lord.

Show us the people that need You. Show us the people that want You. Show us Your way. Show us Yourself Lord in the world where we live.

Lord we have so much to thank you for. We thank You for those people who have been an example in our lives and the relationships we've had with them. Thank you for the people who asked us to come and see You and the love they shared by inviting us into a relationship with You.

Help us Lord to receive more of You. To learn more of You. To share more of You.

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

Hymn: Dear Lord and Father John Greenleaf Whittier StF 495 / H&P 673

1 Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways;
re clothe us in our rightful mind,
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence, praise.

the silence of eternity,
interpreted by love!

2 In simple trust like theirs who heard
beside the Syrian sea
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word
rise up and follow thee.

4 Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace.

3 O Sabbath rest by Galilee,
O calm of hills above,
where Jesus knelt to share with thee

5 Breathe through the heats of our desire
thy coolness and thy balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
speak through the earthquake, wind, and
fire,
O still, small voice of calm!

Reading: Psalm 139 A Psalm of David The Message H&P 883

“GOD, investigate my life; get all the facts first-hand. I’m an open book to you; even from a distance, you know what I’m thinking. You know when I leave and when I get back; I’m never out of your sight. You know everything I’m going to say before I start the first sentence. I look behind me and you’re there, then up ahead and you’re there, too - your reassuring presence, coming and going. This is too much, too wonderful - I can’t take it all in!

Is there any place I can go to avoid your Spirit? to be out of your sight? If I climb to the sky, you’re there! If I go underground, you’re there! If I flew on morning’s wings to the far western horizon, You’d find me in a minute - you’re already there waiting! Then I said to myself, “Oh, he even sees me in the dark! At night I’m immersed in the light!” It’s a fact: darkness isn’t dark to you; night and day, darkness and light, they’re all the same to you.

Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out; you formed me in my mother’s womb. I thank you, High God - you’re breath-taking! Body and soul, I am marvellously made! I worship in adoration - what a creation! You know me inside and out, you know every bone in my body; You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something. Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth; all the stages of my life were spread out before you, the days of my life all prepared before I’d even lived one day.

Your thoughts - how rare, how beautiful! God, I’ll never comprehend them! I couldn’t even begin to count them - any more than I could count the sand of the sea. Oh, let me rise in the morning and live always with you! And please, God, do away with wickedness for good! And you murderers - out of here! - all the men and women who belittle you, God, infatuated with cheap god-imitations. See how I hate those who hate you, GOD, see how I loathe all this godless arrogance; I hate it with pure, unadulterated hatred. Your enemies are my enemies!

Investigate my life, O God, find out everything about me; Cross-examine and test me, get a clear picture of what I'm about; See for yourself whether I've done anything wrong - then guide me on the road to eternal life."

Hymn:

Faithful One

Brian Doerksen

StF 628

Faithful one, so unchanging
Ageless one, you are my rock of peace
Lord of all I depend on you
I call out to you, again and again
I call out to you, again and again

You are my rock in times of trouble
You lift me up when I fall down
All through the storm
Your love is, the anchor
My hope is in You alone

Reading: John 1 v 43-51 Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael New International Version

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴ Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote - Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." ⁴⁶ "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip.

⁴⁷ When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit." ⁴⁸ "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." ⁴⁹ Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel."

⁵⁰ Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that." ⁵¹ He then added, "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man."

Hymn:

This I Believe (the Creed)

Hillsong

1. Our Father everlasting
The All creating One
God Almighty
Through Your Holy Spirit
Conceiving Christ the Son
Jesus our Saviour

2. Our Judge and our Defender
Suffered and crucified
Forgiveness is in You
Descended into darkness
You rose in glorious life
Forever seated high

**I believe in God our Father
I believe in Christ the Son
I believe in the Holy Spirit
Our God is three in one
I believe in the resurrection
That we will rise again
For I believe in the Name of Jesus**

**I believe in You
I believe You rose again
I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord

I believe in life eternal
I believe in the virgin birth
I believe in the saints' communion
And in Your holy Church
I believe in the resurrection
When Jesus comes again
For I believe in the Name of Jesus**

Message:

Last week I was well stressed! I had a whole week of studying on Zoom. Well you know me - I'm not very 'friendly' with tech stuff! Occasionally it played up at my end, sometimes at the host end or when they were trying to bring new people in and not being able to connect them.. I learned stuff about Zoom I didn't know existed and as I hadn't been able to get out, food was pre-prepared and eaten between sessions. It was a tough week!

On top of that my neighbour got Covid and I got snowed in. Not having been out for a week and desperate to get out, when the snow melted I headed for the car but I couldn't find the keys. I got seriously worked up! Searched the house. After hours of searching endless bags and pockets I eventually found them on the bathroom floor! Calm returned!

People have lives like this; searching for inner peace and often missing the obvious. Trying to find peace in dressing up in designer clothes maybe, or through drink or drugs...

Philip had found that inner peace! He was bursting with it and he wanted to tell everybody. As we all do when we have an exciting experience, Philip wanted to share what he had discovered about Jesus with Nathaniel. Well, Nathaniel was a chilled out sort of person. There he is reclining beneath a tree. He didn't want his boat rocked and he didn't want to be pestered! We read in the Psalm that Jesus knows all about us and he certainly searched for Nathaniel and knew him. Jesus and Nathaniel found each other and Nathaniel 's life was changed for ever.

As Christians we all want to share Jesus with other people but you can give somebody something, a gift, but then it's no longer yours and the moment has gone. But sharing is a different thing because you still own a part of it. When you share a box of chocolates, you get some and somebody else gets some. Although if you're like me and have a mania for pretty boxes, you get the box to keep at the end!

Sharing is a two-way thing. Philip wanted to share Jesus with Nathaniel. He wanted to have Jesus in his life but he also wanted Nathaniel to have an experience of Jesus too. But in order to share, the other person has to receive. It's no use trying to befriend somebody who doesn't want you. Friendship has to be two-ways.

Belief is the same: we cannot give people belief we can't make them believe. We can give sympathy, compassion, love and companionship but not belief. People have to believe for themselves but sometimes it has to happen in their own time. It was like this with Nathaniel.

Often folk don't get what you're about, they don't believe us. After all, we live in a world full of false news. Sometimes we just have to switch the news off. We constantly get contrasting information. All of these graphs and charts, one says one thing and one says another and the internet is full of false information so we need to check facts. People have learned to question and doubt. Children in school these days don't sit and be told as we did. We were given a whole load of facts, wrote them down, learnt them and reconstituted them in an exam and hopefully passed. Nowadays they explore for themselves. It's all very different.

Jesus encouraged Nathaniel to explore. "Come and see" He said. He didn't just say believe in me or do this or that or the other he said, "come and see" This is what Jesus encouraged Nathaniel to do: to "come and see".. Nathaniel still had doubts. I mean, Jesus came from Galilee. It wasn't a desirable place. Not the sort of place where the houses would be at the front of the Estate Agents' windows. How could the Messiah, the Saviour that the Jews were waiting for, come from such a place? How could anyone who was anybody come from there? It's easy to be blinded by stereotypes...

When I was teaching the head brought a new little girl to my class. She was shabby, wearing a second-hand uniform with her hair tied back with a rubber band. She was tiny and looked malnourished but I looked after her and got to know her. At break time the head said to me "I suppose your new one's not much cop" which annoyed me a great deal. And actually, this little girl turned out to be very bright, she took to reading like a duck to water and came on in leaps and bounds. I often wonder now if she was able to use her gifts, because she was nearly written off at just 5 years of age... As I said, it's easy to be blinded by stereotypes.

There are people in our community seeking a better life - seeking an opportunity although often in the wrong way. So what do we do? Do we shut Jesus away in church? Even when we are not in lockdown do we lock ourselves away from meeting others? Shut in, driving everywhere, banking online? Are we just going through our traditional motions, or are we genuinely resting in God's company as the disciples did?

And as church numbers drop, do we take on more and more 'church' jobs in the belief that we are being faithful to Jesus whilst ignoring our communities? Or do we meet someone for coffee perhaps, inviting them to come into fellowship so we can understand their lives as well as share some of our own. There are a lot of Nathaniels out there seeking and lots of ways of reaching out. Like volunteering to a role that serves the community.

If Jesus had busied himself only with his small group of followers and friends he would have missed Nathaniel. But He didn't. He said to Nathaniel - as He says to us - "come and see".

So let's respect and treasure each other in their spiritual journey and uphold everyone in love.

In lockdown we have the gift of time. Time to take stock of our lives. To look at how and where we can reach out in love but first, we can take this time to truly reach out and meet God for ourselves.

Intercessions:

Let us make this lock-down a time to receive more of You. Help us Lord to share You in our localities through our thoughts and in our actions. Guide us Lord, drawing us to You in thought and love.

Help us to put an arm around those we meet. Those who are seeking a better life:
Those who are lonely... help us to reach out to them;
Those who are lost... the jobless, the homeless;
Those who are hungry... those whose finances are in chaos;
Those who are afraid... a lot of us are in that category;
Those who are sick... perhaps Covid infected, or injured, ill or otherwise unwell;
Those who haven't heard of you.

Help us Lord to be the people You want us to be:

Your people with Your love to share.

Amen

Hymn: Amazing Grace - my chains are gone

John Newton / Chris Tomlin

1. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see

2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to
fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

**My chains are gone, I've been set free
My God, my Saviour has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy reigns
Unending love
Amazing grace**

3. The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures
He will my shield, my portion be
As long as life endures

My chains are gone...

4. The earth shall soon dissolve like snow
The sun forbear to shine
But God who called me here below
Will be forever mine, will be forever mine
You are forever mine

My chains are gone...

Blessing:

Go into God's world, aware of God's call in your life.

Follow our Lord Jesus Christ who will lead you in paths of service and hope. Lean on the power of the Holy Spirit to give you courage and strength.

May peace, joy and love flow through you to others, in God's name. **Amen**