

**East Durham Methodist Circuit:**  
**Online Service 5<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

**Prepared by Rev Alf Waite**

**Theme: Evangelism**

**Welcome and Call to worship:**

**Psalm 100:** Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is He who made us, and we are His, we are His people, the sheep of His pasture.

Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the LORD is good and His love endures forever His faithfulness continues through all generations.

**Hymn:**    **When morning gilds the skies**    German Hymn    **StF 368 / H&P 276**

1. When morning gilds the skies,  
My heart awaking cries:  
May Jesus Christ be praised!  
Alike at work and prayer  
To Jesus I repair:  
May Jesus Christ be praised!

4. When evil thoughts molest,  
With this I shield my breast,  
May Jesus Christ be praised!  
The powers of darkness fear,  
When this sweet chant they hear,  
May Jesus Christ be praised!

2. To Thee, my God above,  
I cry with glowing love,  
May Jesus Christ be praised!  
The fairest graces spring  
In hearts that ever sing,  
May Jesus Christ be praised!

5. When sleep her balm denies,  
My silent spirit sighs,  
May Jesus Christ be praised!  
The night becomes as day,  
When from the heart we say,  
May Jesus Christ be praised!

3. Does sadness fill my mind?  
A solace here I find,  
May Jesus Christ be praised!  
Or fades my earthly bliss?  
My comfort still is this,  
May Jesus Christ be praised!

6. Be this, while life is mine,  
My canticle divine,  
May Jesus Christ be praised!  
Be this th' eternal song  
Through all the ages long,  
May Jesus Christ be praised!

**Prayers of praise and thanksgiving and Lord's Prayer:**

Loving heavenly Father, we praise You that whoever we are and wherever we go You are there. There is nowhere we can go and be away from Your love and care. We see that in all the beauty around us in Your creation. It makes our hearts sing.

And we join today with all those voices of praise that are going up to Your throne. For You are worthy of all praise. Though our words never really seem enough we are glad that we can use them to honour You. Along with feelings of our heart which bursts with joy in Your presence.

We thank You for ever gift You give us, large and small. Those things that make life worth living. Especially the people in our lives. The loving relationships, but we even

thank You for those who rub us up the wrong way because we can learn so much from every relationship.

We praise You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus, who has brought us new life. For the suffering He went through to draw us back to You. The gift of Your Holy Spirit that continues to teach us Your ways and makes us more like You.

Please accept our thanks and praise and forgive us our sins that we might walk free in Your presence and in Your world. **Amen**

**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: Colossians 4:2-6** New International Version

<sup>2</sup> Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. <sup>3</sup> And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. <sup>4</sup> Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. <sup>5</sup> Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. <sup>6</sup> Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

**Hymn: Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love.** Tom Colvin **StF249 / H&P 145**

**Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love,  
Show us how to serve  
The neighbours we have from you.**

1. Kneels at the feet of his friends,  
Silently washes their feet,  
Master who acts as a slave to them.

**Jesu, Jesu, fill us...**

2. Neighbours are wealthy and poor,  
Varied in colour and race,  
Neighbours are near us and far away.

**Jesu, Jesu, fill us...**

3. These are the ones we should serve,  
These are the ones we should love,  
All these are neighbours to us and you.

**Jesu, Jesu, fill us...**

4. Loving puts us on our knees,  
Silently washing their feet,  
This is the way we should live with you.

**Jesu, Jesu, fill us...**

**Reading: Luke 18:1- 8 The Parable of the Persistent Widow** New International Version

<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. <sup>2</sup> He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. <sup>3</sup> And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

<sup>4</sup>“For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, <sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’”

<sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup> And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? <sup>8</sup> I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

### **Message:**

**<sup>2</sup> Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. <sup>3</sup> And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. <sup>4</sup> Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. <sup>5</sup> Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. <sup>6</sup> Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.** Colossians 4:2-3

The Christian life has a double prong attack on society. In the passage before our text from Colossians, Paul has just dealt with lifestyle issues: avoid immorality, know who you are in Christ, base your life on the word of God, how to live at home within the family and how to be at work.

But the Christian life is not just about lifestyle we also need to use our lips as well. Paul says we need to speak to God and to the people around us. The twin themes of prayer and evangelism.

**Devote yourself to prayer.** The Christian needs to pray and the extension of that is a Christian Church needs to be a church that prays. Not just rescue prayers, a last-ditch attempt to get out of something or through it, but a life of devotion that allows God to be involved in every aspect of our lives. We also need to ask God to move in people’s hearts so they can begin to see the living God cares for them.

**Being watchful and thankful.** We see so much of what is going on in the world today, television, internet, mobile phones bombard us with information about the good and the bad that happens every day around the world. We can be overwhelmed by it at times. This coming week is the twentieth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and we have had the scenes of chaos in Afghanistan as America has brought its campaign to an end in that country.

On the day the attacks happened I was in a television shop with an American, our 'time for God' volunteer, the volunteer we had received. In full technicolour we saw the planes crash into the building. And there are still abuses all around the world today. We are called to have one eye on prayer and one eye on world events. We are also called to be watchful and thankful for the people who live around us. Reading the signs of the times and reading the signs of the place where we live. Where is evil lurking? What are the ills in this community? What are the blocks to people seeing how much they are loved by God?

There was a church we did a mission period with around Barnsley. In preparation for the mission week a prayer walk was arranged, walking around the estate where the church was praying with the prompts they saw. The members who attended the church had grown up on the estate but as life became more prosperous, they had moved away to live but continued to worship at the family church, driving in every Sunday. Walking

around they became aware of the needs of the area. The anti-social behaviour, the poverty, the litter, and many other factors. This transformed the mission of the church going forward. It wasn't a quick fix nor an easy path but the church resolved to go forward with God.

**And pray for us, too.** Then there is the eye on the church: What are the distinct features and qualities of the local church? Where are the friction points? What goes well and what doesn't? Paul is in prison, and he asks for their prayers. Note he does not ask to be set free, to be released, but that he might be able to continue his mission there: **That God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ.**

Paul was not interested in being free to go here and there, but rather that the people around him may be receptive to the gospel message. We may not be in prison, but the same kind of desire should be ours. Jesus said at Gethsemane "Watch and Pray" so you are not overcome. Prayer and praise should go together, watch and be thankful. Prayer does help us recall what good things God has done for us.

Paul says we should pray for the preachers and the witnesses. The preaching plan is an aid to that, so you have little excuse not to. The Colossians came to faith because of the witness of Epaphras. So be like the persistent Widow - petition God with your prayers.

The second prong is to witness to tell people about Jesus. Paul encourages us to speak in a particular way: **Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt.** He asks for understanding and tact, a listening ear. A lot of keen Christians turn people off and Paul doesn't want that. "Oh! Alf is coming, that Jesus freak, let's go the other way". Coming to faith is a journey and as people journey along, different opportunities arise and we need to be ready to encourage.

There are really only seven questions that people have that stops them coming to faith but they can be summed up in just two: 'Who am I?' and 'Why would God be interested in me?' As seasoned Christians we should think through what we believe, what has happened to us so that when opportunities to witness arise we can take them. We let the unbelievers set the agenda and because our answers can be confusing and even controversial, we need to answer with 'Grace'.

I remember once visiting someone who told me that when she first moved to the area she lived in, her son was really not happy. He thought the move had spoiled his chances to progress in the sport of Rugby. She thought of moving back to where she came from until someone who understood how hard it would be and what need to be done, explained all of that to the boy. The lad saw a possibility and settled down in the new home and area because someone showed an interest. So it can be with us as we try to witness. That is the kind of evangelism Paul is advocating - starting where people are and filling in the gaps.

So our responsibility is to prepare ourselves in prayer and understanding and to be awake and thankful, taking each opportunity given to us with grace and truth. **Amen**

**Hymn:**            **God's Spirit is in my heart**            Alan T Dale            **StF 404 / H&P 315**

1. God's Spirit is in my heart,  
He has called me and set me apart.  
This is what I have to do,  
what I have to do.

**He sent me to give the Good News to the poor,  
Tell prisoners that they are prisoners no more,  
Tell blind people that they can see,  
And set the downtrodden free  
And go tell everyone the news that the Kingdom of God has come,  
And go tell everyone the news that the Kingdom of God has come.**

2. Just as the Father sent me,  
So I'm sending you out to be  
My witnesses throughout the world,  
The whole of the world.

**He sent me to give...**

3. Don't worry what you have to say,  
Don't worry because on that day  
God's Spirit will speak in your heart,  
Will speak in your heart.

**He sent me to give...**

**Prayers of Intercession:**

Lord God, we pray for our community:

- For teachers as they bring to fruition their preparations for the new school year.
  - For our children and young people as their summer holidays come to an end and they prepare for new classes, schools and places of education and learning.
  - For healthcare and social workers in their mission to improve the wellbeing of those who are sick and unwell.
  - For those in the armed forces as they prepare for their next challenges in a dangerous world.
  - For volunteers, carers and those who undertake work for which they are not paid.
- Lord, guide and inspire our community, in all we do this week and beyond.

**Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life.**

Lord we pray for all people who are in trouble and fear today:

- For those who are sad because someone they have loved had died
- For those who are anxious because someone is ill or in pain
- For those who are lonely because someone they love is not there for them.

Lord, bless:

- Those who are tired because they have too much to do
- Those who are struggling with finance or are facing the prospect of unemployment
- Those who are unhappy because of an unkind word or action.

Lord, surround those in need with your wisdom, your spirit, your healing and your life-giving peace.

**Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life.**

Lord, you call us to follow in your footsteps:

Help us to know what this looks like in each situation where we find ourselves.  
Help us to know when following you means washing the feet of others,  
When it means turning over tables,  
When it means going to a party at the house of an outsider,  
When it means breaking down the barriers that divide people from each other in the homes where we live, the places we work, the communities where we worship.

We grieve the fact that our world is divided and we ask that you work powerfully in our small lives and our big world to break down the walls that divide.

Break down the walls within our own lives, which hold us back from reaching out to others. Which prevent us from seeing the best in other people, in other cultures, Which stop your love getting in, and your blessing getting out.

**Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life.**

Lord, in gratitude, in deep gratitude for this moment, this place, this world, we give ourselves to you. Take us out, to live as changed people, because we have been touched by the living Lord, and cannot remain the same. Ask much of us, expect much of us, enable much by us, encourage many through us

Living Lord, accept our lives and accept our prayers this day and every day  
You have the words of eternal life and in you we trust. **Amen**

**Hymn:** **Here I Am, Wholly Available** Chris Bowater

<b>Here I Am, Wholly Available</b> <b>As For Me, I Will Serve The Lord</b> <b>Here I Am, Wholly Available</b> <b>As For Me, I Will Serve The Lord</b>	God's Looking For A People Who Are Willing To Be Counted In His Glorious Victory
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1. The Fields Are White Unto Harvest  
But Oh, The Labourers Are So Few  
So Lord, I Give Myself To Help The  
Reaping  
To Gather Precious Souls Unto You

**Here I Am, Wholly Available...**

2. The Time Is Right In The Nation  
For Works Of Power And Authority

**Here I Am, Wholly Available...**

3. As Salt Are We Ready To Savour?  
In Darkness Are We Ready To Be  
Light?  
God's Seeking Out A Very Special  
People  
To Manifest His Truth And His Might

**Here I Am, Wholly Available...**

**Blessing:**

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace as we trust in him, so that we may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**