

East Durham Methodist Circuit:

Online Service for 30th January 2022

Prepared by Rev Alf Waite

Theme: Jesus meets needs.

Call to Worship:

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us so that Your ways may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise You, God; may all the peoples praise You.

Hymn: **To God be the glory Fanny Crosby **StF: 94 / H&P: 463****

1. To God be the glory, great things He hath done,
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life gate that all may go in.

**Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice!
Oh, come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory, great things He hath done.**

2. Oh, perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
To every believer the promise of God;
The vilest offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives. **Praise the Lord...**

3. Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done,
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
But purer, and higher, and greater will be
Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see. **Praise the Lord...**

Prayers of approach:

To God the Creator:

O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth! Who has set Your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings You have ordained strength because of Your enemies, that you might still the enemy and the avenger.

When I consider the heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the Son of Man, that care for them? You have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honour. You have made him to have dominion over the works of your hands; and put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passes through the paths of the seas. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!

To God who forgives all transgressions:

Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. For Your loving kindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in Your truth. I have not sat with the wicked. I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked. I will wash mine hands in innocence: so will I come to Your altar, O Lord: That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Thy wondrous works. Lord, I have loved Your house, and the place where Your honour dwells.

To God who deserves all glory and praise:

O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His, and he made it: and His hands formed the dry land.

O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker.

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: Hebrews 8: 7-13

New International Version

⁷ For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. ⁸ But God found fault with the people and said:

“The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.

⁹ It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord.

¹⁰ This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

¹¹ No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

¹² For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

¹³ By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.

1. "Man of Sorrows" what a name
For the Son of God who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim
Hallelujah, what a Saviour

2. Bearing shame and scoffing rude
In my place condemned He stood
Sealed my pardon with His blood
Hallelujah, what a Saviour

3. Guilty vile and helpless we
Spotless Lamb of God was He
Full atonement can it be
Hallelujah, what a Saviour

4. Lifted up was He to die
"It is finished!" was His cry
Now in heaven exalted high
Hallelujah, what a Saviour

5. When He comes, our glorious King
All His ransomed home to bring
Then anew this song we'll sing
Hallelujah, what a Saviour.

Reading: Mark 1: 40-45 Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy New International Version

⁴⁰ A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

⁴¹ Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

⁴³ Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: ⁴⁴ "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." ⁴⁵ Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

Message:

A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

Here is a man with leprosy and Jesus heals him. It is a crazy story taken at face value. I guess as long-in-the-tooth church goes or even long-in-the-tooth Christians we are used to just accepting these healing stories of Jesus. At face value Jesus heals the sick, but we do not always see that today. There are however many forms of healing, so we have to dig deeper to find the sources of healing.

One of the joys of going on mission to different churches around the country was that we always mixed telling people about Jesus with having fun. On one mission programme we took a load of teenagers Ten Pin bowling. I cannot remember how we got round to talking about faith on that occasion, but we did. One of the lads asked me, "If we are going to die anyway what is the point in believing in God?" That gave me the inroad to share about Jesus, the promise of eternal life and assurance of that through faith in Jesus. Then came the usual pregnant pause or stunned silence, they did not know how to come back to me. The usual response was a string of 'French' words, that I have forgotten the meaning of! I love it when that happens and I love thinking on my feet in those kinds of conversations.

I used to go into local Senior Schools, and I was invited once to talk to the whole of year 9. The lesson started with sharing my faith story and then they had the chance to ask me any questions they wanted and there was a good range of other challenging questions. I had to think on my feet for most of the lesson.

As Christians we need to think through our faith and be ready to give an answer for the hope that is within us. I get disappointed when believers struggle to live the assurance we have been given, because they haven't worked through what faith in Jesus is really all about.

In our Gospel reading the man with leprosy knew he needed healing, and somehow he has come to know that Jesus could help him. The sickness had robbed him of so much: family, community.

It is hard to be ill at any time. Not to be able get on with life, to lack energy. We may think it would be good to have some timeout from time to time but if it is forced on us, we don't like it.

Imagine what it would be like to be this guy, his disease had made him an outcast. He had to live outside the city, we don't how long he had been ill. It would have had a detrimental effect on his mental health. He may have been separated from children or siblings. He would have had to pluck up the courage to approach Jesus and the disciples. He asks if Jesus is willing to heal him and Jesus' willingness is evidenced by him being healed. Jesus has that same power today; it is not his desire that anyone should be ill.

We may know someone who was not been healed despite asking. They may have been people of faith; they may have prayed in deep faith for the miracle. We have to say in the end though that God is God, and He knows best. We sometimes get surprises and even shocks as to who is and who isn't healed.

This man had a need and Jesus met it. Maybe you have a need? Any kind of need - it need not be a health problem. You can bring it to Jesus.

The leper needed to be accepted. His disease had separated him from so much, especially relationships. To all intents and purposes, he was dead to his family and friends. I think it was that as much as his disease that brought him to Jesus looking for compassion.

In the Old Testament God decreed that the aliens, widows, orphans should be cared for. Often the church is seen as an excluding institution rather than an inclusive one. Our Baptism Service makes a point about belonging, it welcomes the child into the family of the church. It also means we have to be there for them at any points in their lives.

Jesus touched the man as a deliberate act, it was a sacrificial act. To those watching on, it would have made Jesus unclean, unacceptable. That was the model Jesus gave us though, even taking him all the way to the cross and he wanted to do it. We have gone through a period where touching was not allowed. The researchers are now saying that has probably done more harm than the virus. We are social beings and we need contact with others.

We may not always agree in the church, but we need to agree that all are welcome in the church and in the kingdom. This is the place where acceptance is to be found.

The man with leprosy also needed to find a new relationship with God. Jesus instructed him to go to the priest and make a sacrifice.

Jesus came to give us that new friendship and we can renew it at any time. Bishop Temple said, "It is a great mistake to think that God is chiefly interested in religion." His main interest is building relationships with His creation.

Luke records in Acts that anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. So the friendship begins, the adventure that lasts into eternity. The leper's life was transformed - as is anyone who lives in Jesus.

Amen

Hymn: For the healing of the nations Fred Kaan **StF: 696 / H&P: 402**

1. For the healing of the nations,
Lord, we pray with one accord,
for a just and equal sharing
of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action
help us rise and pledge our word.

2. Lead us forward into freedom,
from despair your world release,
that, redeemed from war and
hatred,
all may come and go in peace.
Show us how through care and
goodness
fear will die and hope increase.

3. All that kills abundant living,
let it from the earth be banned:
pride of status, race or schooling,
dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice
may we hallow brief life's span.

4. You, Creator God, have written
your great name on humankind;
for our growing in your likeness
bring the life of Christ to mind;
that by our response and service
earth its destiny may find.

Prayers of Intercession:

For All Christians: Heavenly Father, we thank You for every life that has been born from above and is now in union with Christ Jesus our Head and Saviour. Guard and guide each one, and protect their hearts and minds from the deceit and lies that only come for the devil, who is the father of all lies, the great deceiver of men's souls and a murderer from the beginning. Guide each one we pray, into the way of truth and give them wisdom and sound judgement, to recognize the workings of the mystery of iniquity.

Into Your hands we place each blood-bought child of God, and pray Your protection on their lives. Give them discernment to choose the good and reject the evil, and may each one come to a deeper knowledge of Christ and develop a thirst to know You more and more, individually as believers and collectively as the Church of Christ. We pray that all You purpose for each of Your children, may be accomplished in each life, to Your praise and glory. We ask this in the precious name of Jesus, **Amen**

For Our Nation: Heavenly Father, we come to You today to intercede for our nation and the nations of the world that are in such commotion and disarray, and are so antagonistic towards You, and hateful towards the Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for the sins of the world. Lord, there are so many that have been blinded by the lies of

the enemy and who have been prevented from seeing the glorious gospel of the grace of God, but are entrapped by Satan and a slave to sin.

Lord, it is not Your will that any should perish but that all should come to faith in Jesus Christ, and so we pray that You would look down with pity on the nations of the world and the many that are dead in their sins, and who face an eternity - separated from their Creator. Open the eyes of those that are spiritually blind and unblock the ears of those that are spiritually deaf.

Soften the hearts of those that have pridefully rejected the free gift of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and draw many we pray, who are spiritually lost into a saving faith in Christ. We pray against the many different strongholds that are imprisoning the hearts and minds of so many, and ask that the satanic deceptions that have entrapped so many, will be exposed for what they are.

Shine down the sunshine of Your hope into this lost and dying world, and help us not to grow weary in interceding, but rather may we find the grace to plead more intensely, knowing that the time is so short. We ask this in Jesus' name, **Amen**

Hymn: Let Him to whom we now belong Charles Wesley **StF: 557 / H&P: 698**

1. Let Him to whom we now belong
His sovereign right assert,
And take up every thankful song,
And every loving heart.

3. Jesus, Thine own at last receive,
Fulfill our hearts' desire;
And let us to Thy glory live,
And in Thy cause expire.

2. He justly claims us for His own,
Who bought us with a price:
The Christian lives to Christ alone,
To Christ alone he dies.

4. Our souls and bodies we resign;
With joy we render Thee
Our all, no longer ours, but Thine,
To all eternity.

Blessing:

And so, to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in our lives throughout all of 2022 and for ever! **Amen.**