

East Durham Methodist Circuit:

Service for 19th September 2021

Prepared by Rev Dawn Brown and Mrs Margaret Wakefield

Theme: “Faithful”



Call to worship:

Based on Psalm 89 and Matthew 13:31-32

We sing of God’s steadfast love,
And proclaim God’s faithfulness to all generations,
The faithfulness that grows a seed into a great shrub,
The faithfulness that welcomes birds of the air.
The faithfulness that provides sturdy branches for the nests that are built.
God’s faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.
God’s steadfast love is established forever.
Righteousness and justice are our foundation
And God’s eternal love and faithfulness abides with us.

Hymn: **Forever God is Faithful Chris Tomlin **StF 77****

1. Give thanks to the Lord, our God and King
His love endures forever
For He is good, He is above all things
His love endures forever
Sing praise, sing praise
Sing praise, sing praise.

2. With a mighty hand and outstretched arm
His love endures forever
For the life that’s been reborn
His love endures forever
Sing praise, sing praise
Sing praise, sing praise

**Forever, God is faithful
Forever, God is strong
Forever, God is with us
Forever (Repeat)**

3. From the rising to the setting sun
His love endures forever
And by the grace of God, we will carry on
His love endures forever
Sing praise, sing praise
Sing praise, sing praise, yeah

Forever, God is faithful...

Prayers of praise and confession:

Loving God, we praise and thank You,
You do us good not harm, all the days of our lives.
You provide food for our households, with the fruits of Your hands.
You open Your hand to the poor and reach out to the needy.
You open Your mouth with wisdom, and the teachings of kindness are on Your tongue.

Loving God, we praise and thank You for all the ways You provide for us, for all the ways You encourage us, for all the ways You show us how to live. Help us to live according to Your example, so that our very lives are an act of praise to You.

All wise, all loving God, we confess to You our reliance on our own wisdom. We covet what we do not have and compromise ourselves to obtain it. Forgive us, God.

We engage in conflicts and disputes, and allow our disagreements to overtake us,

We envy others, and allow our own selfish ambition to rule our hearts,

We yearn to be the greatest, and to lift ourselves up in power and glory,

Forgive us, and sow in us a harvest of righteousness.

Help us to receive Your forgiveness and wisdom, and let Your grace within us, be pure, peaceable, gentle, and willing to yield. As we know ourselves to be forgiven, may we bring Your mercy and good fruits to others, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy, but with the gentleness and wisdom You dare give.

We ask these prayers in the name of Jesus who taught us to say:

**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: Your love is amazing

Brenton Brown / Brian Doerksen

StF 98

1. Your love is amazing, steady and
unchanging
Your love is a mountain, firm beneath
my feet
Your love is a mystery, how You gently
lift me
When I am surrounded, Your love
carries me

**Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah,
Your love makes me sing (Repeat)**

2. Your love is surprising, I can feel it
rising

All the joy that's growing deep inside of
me
And every time I see You, all Your
goodness shines through
And I can feel this God song, rising up in
me

Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah...

Yes, You make me sing
Lord, You make me sing, sing, sing
How You make me sing

Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah...

Poem: Fonda Little

1. What we say on this earth,
has more power than we know!
It can spiritually bring death or birth,
so remember this firmly,
when you want to utter a curse!

2. Speak love and life into,
everyone and everything You see,
because they aren't just things,
you should lightly throw around,
they can manifest destiny!

3. They are your thoughts,
put into energy and action,
and shape Your living story,
so let all letters and words spoken,
be to praise God and His Glory!

4. Uplift everyone, underneath the sun,
and follow God's son and become so
saved,
and save, those the devil fancied, he
could enslave,
and always look towards, a brighter
future and day,
and follow every word, the Holy Spirit
will say.

5. Follow it down, to every letter and
syllable,
because we are His vessels, and
through us,
He can work incredible miracles.
But we have to be obedient and trust,
this is a must, an absolute must.

6. And even though this journey
with Jesus has just begun,
I promise, if you follow this,
you will hear in heaven,
My good and faithful servant, well done,
well done!

Reading: Luke 16: 1 - 13 The Parable of the Dishonest Manager English Standard Version

He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. ² And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.'³ And the manager said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴ I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.'⁵ So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶ He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' He said to him, 'Take Your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.'⁷ Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'⁸ The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. ⁹ And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

¹⁰ "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. ¹¹ If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹² And if you have not been

faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? ¹³ No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

Message

Faithful???? But to what, may I ask.

A city boy moved to the country. He bought a donkey from an old farmer for £100. The farmer agreed to deliver the donkey. The next day the old farmer drove up and said, "Sorry son, but the donkey died." The city boy replied, "Well, just give me my money back." The farmer answered, "I can't do that; I spent it." The city boy said, "Well just bring me the donkey." The farmer answered, "What are ya gonna do with him?" The city boy answered, "I'm going to raffle him off." The farmer answered, "You can't raffle off a dead donkey!" The city boy answered, "I certainly can. Just watch me." Later the farmer met the city boy and asked, "What happened with that dead donkey?" The city boy answered, "I raffled him off. I sold tickets at £2 each and made a profit of £898." Farmer: "Didn't anyone complain?" City boy: "Just the guy who won. So I gave him his £2 back.

What would you say to this city boy? How would you respond? Good business sense, no morals and ethics? Surely the farmer was wrong and that meant that the city boy had to do something?

Our reading today makes us really think:

Jesus tells many puzzling parables, but this one, is the Lord's most puzzling parables. Jesus told His disciples about a rich man who had a slave acting as Manager. And please understand, this story was not for lost people, it was for people who had experienced the grace of God in their lives ...

It was for people like you and I who had accepted Christ as our personal Lord and Saviour. The Manager was responsible for managing his master's vast holdings. Someone suggested to the rich man that his manager was mishandling the money, squandering it and spending it indiscriminately. The manager was hauled onto the red carpet and told to settle his affairs, get the books in order, and get out. FIRED!!

In wide-eyed panic, this dishonest manager began to ponder his future. "What in the world will I do? I am too lazy to work. I am too proud to beg. What will I do?"

The wheels in his brain began to turn counter-clockwise... his brain's wheels were conditioned to turn in the wrong direction. His mind, greased by greed and expedience, worked rapidly. He thought, "I have it!" I will call in my master's debtors and reduce their debts, falsifying their accounts. Then because I have helped them, they will be obligated to help me. If they do not feel obligated enough, I will have material for blackmail because they will have had a part in the crime."

He called the debtors in one by one. "How much do you owe?" "One hundred measures of oil." The manager said, "Then change it to fifty." Another debtor came to his desk. "What is your debt?" "One hundred measures of wheat." "Then take the pen and write down eighty." And so it went.

When the master discovered this trickery, he was, believe it or not, impressed.

Oh, he was disturbed. Certainly, he was angry. And the manager did lose his job. But, the master was also impressed.

Jesus, author of this story, says there is something in the bad man's action which is a good example. He said, "This fellow is a shrewd dude. He is a crook, but he is clever in a way you need to take note."

What is the lesson of this puzzling parable? It is this: Life, as he had experienced it, would soon be over. His days spending another man's wealth were ending. He took steps to prepare for living beyond that abrupt ending.

His emphasis: No matter how much or how little you may have in ability, opportunity, or wealth, you can manage your life in such a way as to be really rich.

If we would be truly successful, we must know that what we have, we have by the grace of God. We are merely managers, and we need to be Faithful to the One whom we serve. Jesus makes it clear we need to be Faithful to one, we cannot serve both God and the World.

What we have, we have by the Grace of God

Our principles are built on the solid foundation of the Grace of God. In Ephesians 1, this foundation made clear to us, we have been saved by grace, not because of anything, but because God loves us. We have been saved by Jesus Christ who died on the cross because of that love. God's preventative Grace has saved us and we have been sanctified giving us the promise of eternal life through this amazing love.

Calling us to live faithfully that one day we will join our Father in Heaven and hear the words, Well done you good and faithful servant.

So how do we live faithfully with our God

Firstly:

We need to do the best with what we have. It does not matter in God's eyes how much we have but how well we handle it. Barnabas is praised for his large gift of land to the early church. The widow, by her gift of less than a penny. Someone said, "I am but one ... but I am one. I cannot do much ... but I can do something. What I can do ... I ought to do. What I ought to do ... by the grace of God, I will do."

The Bible commands, "Whatever You do in word or deed, do it all to the glory of God." Luke 16:10 says, "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much." Eugene Peterson's translation declares, "If you are honest in small things, you will be honest in big things ... If you are not honest in small jobs, who will put you in charge of the store?"

Secondly:

What we manage is not ours.

All of us are like the manager, handling for a while the property of another. The Bible declares, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it." Not even our lives are our own. The manager was a slave. He belonged to his master. "In Him we live and move and have our being." Life, breath, and all things come from Him.

Our time, talents, and resources are all His, given by His grace. As we are children of God, we have accepted the fact that He is our loving Master, and we will give an accounting to Him.

Another example that might help us think twice how we manage and who we are faithful to is this. A rich man left on an extended trip and asks the builder to build his house with certain plans and specifications. The builder, with no one around to check on him, proceeded to cheat on every specification of the house. Floors, beams, walls, and roof were of the cheapest material and all built on a flimsy and poor foundation. When the rich man returned, he sought out the builder and said, "Keep the keys. They are the keys to your house. You did not know it, but you were building this house for yourself."

God's word has our plans and specification in it and we are called to build. We need to therefore do our best with what we have. It is to know that what we manage is not ours, and we need to be faithful to the one who we manager for.

Thirdly:

The things we manage are not real.

What do I mean, it's not real – of course it is real?

When I say it's not real, I mean that one day when our time on earth has come to an end, it's not real because you cannot take it with you. So in verse 11, Jesus asks: If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?

Mark 8:36: "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul."

Faithfulness to whom?

It is a matter of exchanging a life you cannot keep for a life you cannot lose. It is being faithful to life that takes us into eternity, a life with our Father in Heaven, our Brother Jesus Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit with all the saints who have gone before us.

How faithful are we?

Hymn: God of my Faith

Colin Ferguson

StF 629

1. God of my Faith, I offer You my doubt,
For life at times seems far too dark for
me,
And my belief becomes more insecure,
When worldly cares produce
uncertainty.

2. God of my hope, I offer You my fear
When I am scared by my anxiety,
When all I hear is suffering and woe,
In all my shadows You will walk with me.

3. God of my joy, I offer You my grief,
When I sink down in sadness or despair,

When in depression I cannot be
touched,
I pray in all my depths to find You there.

4. God of my love, I offer You my pain,
When I'm alone and feel nobody cares,
In aching age or in rejected Youth,
You bear my cross and dry my human
tears.

5. God of my life, I offer You my dreams,
Light in the darkness where I hide from
view.
Light in my faith, my hope, my joy and
love,

Light in my Life and all my life in You.

Prayers of Intercession:

Almighty God, we thank You for the gift of being able to speak to You directly through prayer. We gather before You today to express our concerns for the Church and the world, and to thank You for Your compassion and all that You provide for us.

Lord, in Your Mercy: Hear our Prayer.

Faithful God we pray for Christians throughout the world, and particularly for those who are persecuted because of their faith in You. We ask for Your protection for them, and strength and guidance for all individuals and organisations that seek to help them.

We pray for Your church, and all the churches in the East Durham district. May all Your people be built up in faith and demonstrate in their lives the gospel of Your Son Jesus Christ. Give courage to those who find it hard to follow You. Give us encouragement when we find the teachings of Jesus difficult to take on board.

Lord in Your Mercy: Hear our Prayer.

Creator God, we pray for Your world, particularly those countries that are torn apart by conflict, illness and hunger. We continue to pray for the people of Afghanistan as they begin to rebuild their lives following recent events. We ask for Your protection and support for all refugees who have had to move to new countries. We pray for the leaders of all nations that they would strive for justice and peace for all people.

Lord in Your Mercy: Hear our Prayer.

Loving God, we pray for our local community. Please show us how we can best serve people who are struggling in any way. We pray for organisations that are starting to meet for the first time since the COVID pandemic began.

Lord in Your Mercy: Hear our Prayer.

Caring God, we pray for those who are suffering from physical, emotional or mental illness. Help them to keep their eyes fixed on You and give them the courage to face the trials and difficulties that may come. May those who are ill feel Your caring, healing arms surround them with comfort and love.

In a few moments of silence, please pray for those who are in Your hearts and thoughts today.

Lord in Your Mercy: Hear our Prayer.

Loving God we pray for those kept fresh in our memory and for those long forgotten, for all who shared our homes, our places of work and our church life, for all who helped to shape our lives. We pray too for the recently departed, thinking today of Arnold Hood, we ask that they all find rest in Your Heavenly Kingdom.

Lord in Your Mercy: Hear our Prayer.

Almighty God, as we move into another week, prevent our feet from stumbling and walk with us on our journey as we seek to do Your will. Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of Your Son, our Risen Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Hymn: O Jesus I have promised

J E Bode

StF 563 / H&P 704

1. O Jesus, I have promised
To serve thee to the end;
Be thou forever near me,
My Master and my friend;
I shall not fear the battle
If thou art by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway
If thou wilt be my guide.

2. O let me feel thee near me!
The world is ever near:
I see the sights that dazzle,
The tempting sounds I hear.
My foes are ever near me,
Around me and within;
But, Jesus, draw thou nearer,
And shield my soul from sin.

3. O let me hear thee speaking
In accents clear and still,
Above the storms of passion,
The murmurs of self-will.
O speak to reassure me,
To hasten or control;
O speak, and make me listen,
Thou guardian of my soul.

4. O Jesus, thou hast promised
To all who follow thee
That where thou art in glory
There shall thy servant be.
And, Jesus, I have promised
To serve thee to the end;
O give me grace to follow,
My Master and my friend.

Blessing:

Arise from this place with the Spirit of God in your hearts.
Arise from this moment to continue your walk of faithfulness.
Arise from this time to travel with people who need a companion today,
And take your next steps in faith to serve our Father in Heaven

Amen.