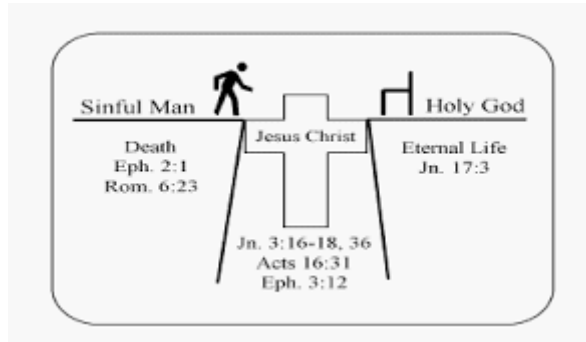


East Durham Methodist Circuit:
On-line Service for fifth week of Lent: 21st March 2021

Prepared by Rev Dawn Brown and Ashleigh Pritchard
Reader: Margaret Naylor

Theme: Talk about Jesus



Call to worship:

Holy One, dwell within us. Whisper in our ears. Glimmer in our vision. Write upon our hearts. We wait with open ears, open eyes and open hearts to know you Lord. **Amen**

This week our service starts with two hymns:

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
Hallelujah, hallelujah
Hallelujah
Your love makes me sing

2. Your love is surprising
I can feel it rising
Oh the joy that's glowing
Deep inside of me
Every time I see you
All your goodness shines through
I can feel this God song
Rising up in me

Hallelujah, hallelujah
Hallelujah
Your love makes me sing
Hallelujah, hallelujah
Hallelujah
Your love makes me sing

Hymn: I will sing the wondrous story Francis H Rawley **StF 323 / H&P 223**

1. I will sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me,
How He left His home in glory
For the cross of Calvary.

Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me,
Sing it in the light of glory,
Sing it through eternity

2. I was lost, but Jesus found me,
Found the sheep that went astray,
Threw His loving arms around me,
Drew me back into His way. **Yes, I'll sing...**

3. I was bruised, but Jesus healed me;
Faint was I from many a fall;
Sight was gone, and fears possessed
me,
But He freed me from them all. **Yes, I'll sing...**

4. Days of darkness still come o'er me,
Sorrow's paths I often tread,
But the Saviour still is with me;
By His hand I'm safely led. **Yes, I'll sing...**

5. He will keep me till the rapture,
Day by day He'll wash my feet,
And will transform all my nature
That in glory we may meet. **Yes, I'll sing...**

Prayers of Praise, Confession and Thanksgiving:

Thank you, Lord God for the opportunity of worship. We look forward to a time when we can meet together again, face to face, and share the warmth of your embrace.

Thank you that in worship we can put aside the uncertainties of this world and rest upon the certainties of the Kingdom, for your promises are not changeable, but immovable and eternal.

Thank you that we can bring to your feet all the hurts and fears that trouble us, and leave them there, knowing that your strength and assurance are all that we require.

Thank you that as we draw near in worship, we are transported from a world of concerns and fears, to a place where we can be at peace in your presence, find healing, wholeness and refreshment.

Dear Lord, Thank you for helping us to make it through this difficult year - a year in which each of us have faced our own challenges, sometimes without support we would usually have from family and friends. Thank you that you've carried us through the uncertainty of deep waters, through the flames of trials, and through the pain of hard losses. We are constantly aware of how much we need you, your grace, your strength and your power working through even the toughest days.

Lord, please forgive us for giving too much time and attention to other things, for looking to other people before coming to you first. Help us to reflect again, on you. Thank you that you came to give new life, peace, hope, and joy. Thank you that your power is made perfect in our weakness.

Help us to remember that the gift of Christ, is our greatest treasure. Fill us with your joy and the peace of your Spirit. Direct our hearts and minds towards you. Thank you for your reminder that both in times of celebration and in times of brokenness, you're still with us. For you never leave us. Thank you for your daily powerful Presence in our lives, that we can be assured your heart is towards us, your eyes are over us, and your ears are open to our prayers. Thank you that you surround us with love and know that we are safe in your care.

We choose to be close to you today and keep you first in our hearts and lives. With you by our side, we have great hope for the future. We look forward to all that You still have in store for us.

Amen

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: Jeremiah 31: 31 - 34

New International Version

³¹ "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. ³² 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 broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.

³³ "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

³⁴ 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," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Reading: Hebrews 5: 7 - 10

New International Version

⁵ In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father."

⁶ And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

⁷ During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered ⁹ and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him ¹⁰ and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Hymn: Man of Sorrows

Philipp Bliss

StF 361 / H&P 228

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

2. Guilty, vile, and helpless, we,
Spotless Lamb of God was He;
Full redemption - can it be?
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

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

4. When He comes, our glorious King,
To His kingdom us to bring,
Then anew this song we'll sing
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

Reading: John 12: 20 -33 Jesus predicts His death New International Version

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus."

²² Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. ²³ Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵ Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

²⁷ "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." ²⁹ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

³⁰ Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. ³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

Hymn: I cannot tell why He, whom angels worship William Fullerton **StF 350 / H&P 328**

1. I cannot tell why He, whom angels' worship,
Should set His love upon the sons of men,
Or why, as Shepherd, He should seek the wanderers,
To bring them back, they know not how or when.
But this I know, that He was born of Mary,
When Bethlehem's manger was His only home,
And that He lived at Nazareth and laboured,
And so the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is come.

2. I cannot tell how silently He suffered,
As with His peace He graced this place of tears,
Or how His heart upon the Cross was broken,
The crown of pain to three and thirty years.
But this I know, He heals the broken-hearted,
And stays our sin, and calms our lurking fear,
And lifts the burden from the heavy laden,
For yet the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is here.

3. I cannot tell how He will win the nations,
How He will claim His earthly heritage,
How satisfy the needs and aspirations
Of east and west, of sinner and of sage.
But this I know, all flesh shall see His glory,
And He shall reap the harvest He has sown,
And some glad day His sun shall shine in splendour
When He the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is known.

4. I cannot tell how all the lands shall worship,
When, at His bidding, every storm is stilled,
Or who can say how great the jubilation
When all the hearts of men with love are filled.
But this I know, the skies will thrill with rapture,
And myriad, myriad human voices sing,
And earth to heaven, and heaven to earth, will answer:
At last the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is King.

Message: So what can you tell?

Have you been singing along? I cannot tell why he, whom angels' worship, I cannot tell how silently he suffered, I cannot tell how all the lands shall worship. So what can you tell? If someone were to come up to you and ask you to show or tell them about Jesus, What would you do?

I recall as a young youth pastor, we were at a circuit youth camp, things were really going very well. The Spirit of God was at work in the lives of the young people. Now my sister, Yvette, who is 6 years younger than I am, came up to me and asked – I want to give my life to Jesus, will you help me? – Well, I stood there and responded – let me find someone who knows what to do? Afterwards I thought, what am I doing? Why did I not sit down with her and lead her? Why did I run away and find someone else? What could or would have happened, if I had nowhere to go?

Today's readings have various different powerful messages, and these messages all share various different stories of who Jesus/God is and how people see and experience the special unique relationship.

In John, the settings - the Jewish Passover Festival, they were celebrating the ancient story of how God had set the Israelites free from slavery in Egypt. It was a Jewish festival, Gentiles were the enemy, and you wouldn't expect Gentiles to come as pilgrims to participate in it. However, more and more in New Testament times, there were little pockets of Gentiles – Greeks and Romans – who had become attracted to Jesus, the Jewish man from Nazareth. They were disillusioned with the Greek and Roman gods and they were hungry for something more, something real. They found the story of one true Creator God who wanted his people not only to worship him, but also to live a moral and ethical life, and many of them found this attractive. So they adopted parts of the Jewish religion – they joined in the worship of the synagogues, and tried to follow the commandments – These people were known in New Testament times as 'God-fearers'.

We read there was a group, they may have been in the crowds following Jesus, They may have heard stories about his miracles and his teachings, and they want to know more. So they come to one of Jesus' disciples, Philip of Bethsaida. 'Philip' is a Greek name, and Bethsaida is an area of Galilee where a lot of Gentiles live, so perhaps they feel a sense of connection to Philip. They go to him and say some of the most beautiful words written in the gospels: "Sir, we wish to see Jesus" (v.21).

But Philip isn't quite so sure about their request – wondering what are they up to, so he takes it to Andrew. (Andrew introduced Jesus to his brother Simon Peter) True to form, Andrew has no hesitation; "Let's go and tell Jesus about it", he says. Spiritual seekers need their Philips and their Andrews – someone who can help them get to know Jesus better. Or like my sister – someone they know and trust.

And the Greeks are taken on a journey of discovering, encountering Jesus and All the live changes opportunities that are awaiting those who call upon the name of the Lord. Jesus speaks about his death on the Cross and His rejection by the very people he came to save. And then the promise of what is to come.

So what's the challenge for us today?

The Greeks knew that they could go to Phillip and they could ask him to see Jesus. Would a person come up to you or to me and ask about Jesus? Does the way we live, respond act, reflect the beauty of Jesus? Even just the way we speak or smile?

A lovely story is told by a lady in chapel one Sunday during sharing – for months she had been taking the train to work, and because of her busy household demands, she would spend time on the train just reading her morning Bible devotions. That week a man came and sat next to her and told her about his life changing experience. He had been watching her over the past months and noticed how positive and at peace she was, so he went and bought himself the book that he had seen her reading. And then he went to church and as a result of reading the book – something changed. He met Jesus!

Our actions are an extension of our relationship with Jesus and there is something about us that Jesus will - and can - use. The fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit allow people to come to us – The 'Greeks' of the world (not the nation, but rather those who are separated from the Love of God) are all around us, and at the right time, in the right place, not for us but for them, they will come to us if we are prepared to listen.

What can we tell them?

They may have all sorts of intellectual questions about God, or they may just feel like God is a million miles away from them and if there's a way to get closer, they want to find it. The conversation might even be more scary for us than it may be for them. What can I tell them? Some of us are like Philip and as I was back then – we say let's go and find someone to speak to. Or we might be an Andrew, just waiting to introduce someone to Jesus.

Let's not fear – remember the song. "When God's spirit is in our hearts, he has called us and sets us apart". In our Jeremiah reading, we were told that we will know God and His teachings will be written in our hearts. And friends, that is what we can tell others - how Jesus is to us as individual people. His love for us, His gift of Life for us, His Promises and our home in Eternity with Him!

A young preacher went to a new church as pastor. He thought the people wanted to hear intellectual preaching, so he filled his sermons with these things: quotations, theological reflections. His church attendances began to fall off. The young people left the church. Then one day, when he came to his pulpit, he found a card with the words, "We would like to see Jesus," written on it. He was angry at first but soon began to realise he had been giving his people the wrong messages. As soon as he began to explain that Jesus was not a person in a theological book but his friend and the Saviour whom he loved, his congregation began to grow, and the young people returned to the church.

Sharing Jesus with others, is a special experience – can you remember when someone shared Jesus with you? Was it in a song? Was it a sermon? Was it a scripture reading? Was it an action? How about taking a moment now to write your story down, if you have not done it before. And if you have, how about writing the next chapter – of how Jesus keeps working in our lives over and over again: leading us, challenging us, and in our

struggles how time and time again we are conquerors because of the power of Jesus' name.

As we start moving out of this Lockdown, people will be seeking, longing, searching. And if they stand before you and ask you how to see Jesus, what will you be able to show or tell them?

So be ready! Have a song; have a story; invite them to worship; give them a book.

Pray that the Holy Spirit who is at work in our lives may be set free to share what Jesus has done for us and continues to do for us. Be ready! The time has come! **Amen**

Intercessions:

We pray for those who are deeply affected by the coronavirus pandemic, be that through illness, isolation or anxiety. May they know that you are with them and are helping them to find relief and recovery.

We pray for those who are sick. We pray that they are wrapped in your love and kept safe and cherished.

We pray for those struggling with mental illness, anxiety and depression. We pray that there will be the necessary resources and finances to provide support services to them. Fill us with compassion and wisdom to be a friend and listening ear to those in need.

We pray for those guiding our nation at this time, for those responsible for making life changing decisions and shaping policy; may they make wise decisions. May they use tools, given by you, to maintain justice and righteousness in their respective positions.

We pray for all medical professionals; doctors, nurses, medical researchers and emergency workers. May they use the skills you have given them to bring hope, healing and wholeness to those in their care. May they know your guidance and everlasting support in times of frustration and pain where their skills are not enough to prevent injury or death. Bless each one of them, that they may be a blessing to others.

We pray for those who feel they are forgotten and unseen, may they know you and remember that they are seen and loved by you Lord. Search our hearts to reveal those we hide our faces from, the outcast, the stranger or the homeless. Change our hearts that we may turn our faces towards these people and see them as your beloved children.

We grieve for those that are living in war-torn countries where there is much blood-shed, corruption and unrest in their governments. We pray that in your grace you would intervene - by removing corrupt leaders and replacing them with those of integrity.

Lord, we pray for our own Christian faith. We pray that we are confident enough in our faith to share it with people when they ask us about Jesus. Give us the confidence to share our own experiences of Jesus with others and encourage them to open their hearts to Jesus too.

Amen

