

**East Durham Methodist Circuit:**  
**Online Service for 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2021**

compiled by Rev Alf Waite

**Theme: Dream Big!**

**Call to worship:**

How lovely is Your dwelling place, LORD Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

**Hymn: Christ triumphant, ever reigning**

Michael Saward

**StF 319**

1 Christ triumphant, ever reigning,  
Saviour, Master, King!  
Lord of heaven, our lives sustaining,  
hear us as we sing:

**Yours the glory and the crown,  
the high renown, the eternal name.**

2 Word incarnate, truth revealing,  
Son of Man on earth!  
power and majesty concealing  
by Your humble birth:  
Yours the glory...

3 Suffering servant, scorned, ill - treated,  
victim crucified!

death is through the cross defeated,  
sinners justified:  
**Yours the glory...**

4 Priestly King, enthroned for ever  
high in heaven above!  
sin and death and hell shall never  
stifle hymns of love:  
**Yours the glory...**

5 So, our hearts and voices raising  
through the ages long,  
ceaselessly upon You gazing,  
this shall be our song:  
**Yours the glory...**

**Old Testament Reading:**

**Psalm 84**

New International Version

<sup>1</sup> How lovely is Your dwelling place,  
LORD Almighty!  
<sup>2</sup> My soul yearns, even faints,  
for the courts of the LORD;  
my heart and my flesh cry out  
for the living God.  
<sup>3</sup> Even the sparrow has found a home  
and the swallow a nest for herself,  
where she may have her young—  
a place near Your altar,  
LORD Almighty, my King and my God.  
<sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who dwell in Your  
house;  
they are ever praising You.  
<sup>5</sup> Blessed are those whose strength is in  
You,  
whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.  
<sup>6</sup> As they pass through the Valley of Baka,  
they make it a place of springs;

the autumn rains also cover it with pools.  
<sup>7</sup> They go from strength to strength,  
till each appears before God in Zion.  
<sup>8</sup> Hear my prayer, LORD God Almighty;  
listen to me, God of Jacob.  
<sup>9</sup> Look on our shield, O God;  
look with favour on Your anointed one.  
<sup>10</sup> Better is one day in Your courts  
than a thousand elsewhere;  
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the  
house of my God  
than dwell in the tents of the wicked.  
<sup>11</sup> For the LORD God is a sun and  
shield; the LORD bestows favour and  
honour; no good thing does he withhold  
from those whose walk is blameless.  
<sup>12</sup> LORD Almighty,  
blessed is the one who trusts in You.

## **Prayer of adoration and thanksgiving.**

Loving God, You who is the Ancient of Days, caring and compassionate. Our God. We call on You by the name of Jesus, offering our praise and adoration, though we know our words are not really sufficient.

You are always more and as we turn to You, You have already turned to us and called on us: My people! My beloved!

To wait before You and meditate on You – this is what restores us. To know again that You are the Living God – this is what reawakens our hope.

So we gather in Your presence and offer You our love and thanks for keeping the world turning, for infusing all that exists with the breath of Your Spirit, for looking on us with warmth and pride because we are Yours.

So hear these our praises and the cry of our hearts as we worship You today. **Amen**

## **A prayer of confession:**

Lord Jesus Christ, You summon us to follow You day by day, yet we confess that we have not always been obedient to Your call.

We have honoured You with our lips but not been willing to take up our cross and walk the difficult path. Lord of the journey: forgive us and help us to follow You.

Thank You that You have promised in Your word that if we confess our sin, You are faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **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**

**New Testament Reading:**      **Acts 26:1-16**      New International Version

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for Yourself."

So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defence: <sup>2</sup>"King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before You today as I make my defence against all the accusations of the Jews, <sup>3</sup> and especially so because You are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg You to listen to me patiently.

<sup>4</sup>"The Jewish people all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee. <sup>6</sup>And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. <sup>7</sup>This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to

see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that these Jews are accusing me. <sup>8</sup> Why should any of You consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

<sup>9</sup> "I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. <sup>10</sup> And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord's people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. <sup>11</sup> Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.

<sup>12</sup> "On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. <sup>13</sup> About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. <sup>14</sup> We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do You persecute me? It is hard for You to kick against the goads.'

<sup>15</sup> "Then I asked, 'Who are You, Lord?'

"I am Jesus, whom You are persecuting,' the Lord replied. <sup>16</sup> 'Now get up and stand on Your feet. I have appeared to You to appoint You as a servant and as a witness of what You have seen and will see of me.

**Hymn: Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire**

Charles Wesley

**H&P 469**

1. Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire,  
Let us thine influence prove;  
Source of the old prophetic fire,  
Fountain of life and love.

3. Expand thy wings, celestial Dove,  
Brood o'er our nature's night;  
On our disordered spirits move,  
And let there now be light.

2. Come, Holy Ghost - for, moved by thee,  
Thy prophets wrote and spoke -  
Unlock the truth, thyself the key,  
Unseal the sacred book.

4. God, through himself, we then shall  
know,  
If thou within us shine;  
And sound, with all thy saints below,  
The depths of love divine.

**New Testament Reading: Matthew 10: 1-14 Jesus Sends Out the Twelve** New Int. Vsn.

<sup>1</sup> Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

<sup>2</sup> These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; <sup>3</sup> Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup> Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

<sup>5</sup> These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. <sup>6</sup> Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. <sup>7</sup> As You go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' <sup>8</sup> Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely You have received; freely give.

<sup>9</sup> “Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with You in Your belts - <sup>10</sup> no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. <sup>11</sup> Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. <sup>12</sup> As you enter the home, give it your greeting. <sup>13</sup> If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. <sup>14</sup> If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet.

### **Message:**

The major theme across many of the different strands of the Christian Church is how to be a follower of Jesus and make more followers. I thought a good way to do that might be to look at the twelve disciples that Jesus first called to follow Him; Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot. So, as part of a series I am planning, I am looking at them as individuals. Today I am thinking of **James son of Alphaeus**.

It would be easy to look at the well-known ones but the less well-known also have things to teach us. You may want to accuse me of conjecture, but I still think we can get insights.

There are several James' in the New Testament: James the son of Zebedee, brother to John. James the half-brother of Jesus, who though a late convert became the leader of the church in Jerusalem and James the father of Judas one of the named disciples but not Judas Iscariot.

We are told that this James was the son of Alphaeus and from that we can speculate that he was the brother of Levi the tax collector who became known as Matthew, so it's most likely he came from a tax collecting family.

His mother is believed to be one of the prominent women who followed Jesus, was present at the foot of the cross and one of those who went to the tomb on resurrection Sunday.

James had a nickname, James the Little, not James the Less. If you go down the Bailey in Durham you pass a church dedicated to Mary, the Less. It is the chapel for St John's College. I often wonder what made her 'less' - which is not very nice! This however is James the Little, which probably means he was small in stature. You know the saying - good things come in small packages, which to my mind speaks of jewellery, perhaps a wedding or engagement ring signifying commitment or loyalty, though interestingly, some of the cruellest dictators have been small in stature like Hitler or Napoleon Bonaparte!

We may say who am I? I am only a small person, or in the general scheme of things I am a small cog in a big machine. What can I do or say? We are only a small part of the worldwide church, what can we contribute?

Mrs Ward used to say, “God and one is a majority” Size does not matter. As the Methodist Church we are not a democracy. Yes, we meet a lot to make decisions and our governing body, the annual conference meets to confer but in all of that they seek the mind of God. That isn't to say we always find that!

However, we can - and should - **Dream Big, Pray Big and Believe Big!**

The obvious thing we can say about James is that he was willing to follow Jesus when called. When Jesus called the twelve ready to send them on mission James was there. He went with Jesus to learn about Him, who He was and what He was here to do so that he could carry on that mission when Jesus returned to heaven.

At a recent Staff Meeting, Dawn led our devotions and the reflection she read was quite damning stating, "We learn what we know of God from our worship rather than from the Bible and what it says about Jesus."

In his willingness to learn and follow we find James in the middle of it all. He went on the mission trips to the lost sheep of Israel, to proclaim the message 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. They did what Jesus did.

As I said earlier, James was most likely a Tax Collector, in other words he had a past. We know from the story of Zacchaeus that tax collectors had a reputation for dishonesty as well as being traitors who betrayed the purity of Israel by serving the Romans. We all have a past, the Apostle Paul had a past, so had the great King David, known as a man after God's own heart. It never stopped them serving God.

Lastly, James died a martyr. Tradition had it that he was hurled out of the Temple and beaten to death by clubs. He was doing what Jesus his Saviour and Master did. James' symbol is a club. He gave his whole even to shedding his blood.

What of us then? In the great scheme of things we are small, we are people with pasts but we are forgiven by God. We are still called to build His Kingdom, but nothing need get in the way.

Lord give us the faith that can remove and sink the mountain to a plain. **Amen.**

**Hymn: Give me the faith which can remove** Charles Wesley **StF 661 / H&P 767**

1. Give me the faith which can remove  
And sink the mountain to a plain;  
Give me the childlike praying love,  
Which longs to build Thy house again;  
Thy love, let it my heart o'erpow'r,  
And all my simple soul devour.

2. I want an even strong desire,  
I want a calmly fervent zeal,  
To save poor souls out of the fire,  
To snatch them from the verge of hell,  
And turn them to a pard'ning God,  
And quench the brands in Jesus' blood.

3. I would the precious time redeem,  
And longer live for this alone:  
To spend and to be spent for them  
Who have not yet my Savior known;  
Fully on these my mission prove,  
And only breathe, to breathe Thy love.

4. My talents, gifts, and graces, Lord,  
Into Thy blessed hands receive;  
And let me live to preach Thy Word,  
And let me to Thy glory live;  
My every sacred moment spend  
In publishing the sinner's Friend.

5. Enlarge, inflame, and fill my heart  
With boundless charity divine,  
So shall I all my strength exert,  
And love them with a zeal like Thine,  
And lead them to Thy open side,  
The sheep for whom the Shepherd died.

## **Prayers of Intercession:**

God of all creation, You hold the depths of the earth in Your hands. You are closer to us than the air we breathe. Fill our souls with Your wonderful love and light.

Give us strength and courage to reflect that love and light in the world. Let us never shrink back from who we are in You or hide our light inside ourselves. Renew in us a sense of joy, painting the dark shadows around us with Your light, Your love and Your salvation.

Hear us today as we pray for a world too often darkened by hatred, evil, power and greed.

Within our darkest night: **Let Your light shine.**

God of power and might, Your broken world cries out from the depths, a world dominated by the darkness of war, terror, pain and suffering. We think of the on-going and deepening conflict in Afghanistan. We share the pain and anguish of those who have had to flee from their homes, countries and livelihoods, who risk their lives, desperate for a new start free from fear and war. May they see Your light, feel Your strength and power and know the truth of Your promise that we shall not be overcome by the dark shadows of life or the darkness of human nature.

Within our darkest night: **Let Your light shine.**

God of compassion and grace, we share with You our love and concern for people in a dark place today. We have on our hearts the friends and loved ones of the victims of violence and hatred. We pray that they will find Your strength in the compassion and love of those around them. We pray for tolerance in our society. Let Your light shine through the darkness of all their pain and their suffering.

Within our darkest night: **Let Your light shine.**

God of life, we ask for Your healing power on those who are enduring pain and illness. We especially think of ... **name those known to you**... who we name quietly in our hearts

We share the grief of people close to us, who've recently lost loved ones. We especially think of ... **name those known to you**... We remember that as we weep with the grieving, we embrace the joy of them.

We know Your everlasting light shines with us in moments of great sadness and great joy.

Within our darkest night: **Let Your light shine.**

God of love and hope, renew in us a deeper sense of who we are in You. Help us to be aware of Your presence each and every day. Make us instruments of love and praise. May our words, actions and lives be living examples of Your forgiving, healing, life-giving love. **Amen**

**Hymn: Amazing Grace**

John Newton

**StF 440 / H&P 215**

1. Amazing grace, How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost, but now I am 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.

3. Through many dangers, toils and  
snares  
I have already come,  
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far  
And grace will lead me home.

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

5. Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,  
And mortal life shall cease  
I shall possess within the veil,  
A life of joy and peace.

6. When we've been there ten thousand  
years  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we've first begun.

**Blessing:**

As we continue our journey with God, we hear the words of Jesus:

'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded You. And remember, I am with You always, to the end of the age.' **Amen.**