

**Welcome to Worship with
Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist Circuit**

Worship at Home

Sunday 13th September 2020

Today is **Education Sunday**, and with all our children and students able to return to a classroom learning environment after months of home schooling, it seems very appropriate to focus our worship on the theme of teaching today. So I am using some materials from Churches Together in England for this special Sunday.

Over the past few months, some of you may have been feeling a bit like the old dog who doesn't want to learn new tricks, yet many of us have found ourselves having to embrace new learning, especially technology, if we wanted to stay in touch with church and family members.

Our learning this morning comes from Paul in his letter to the Romans, where he urges us to consider how we welcome and treat each other in church – and therefore the wider community.

If you have a candle you may like to light it

Call to Worship

Exodus 13 v 20 - 22

As the Israelites entered the wilderness, GOD went ahead of them in a Pillar of Cloud during the day to guide them on the way, and at night in a Pillar of Fire to give them light; so they could travel both day and night.

The Pillar of Cloud by day and the Pillar of Fire by night never left the people.

StF 18

1 Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know that I am God.

2 I am the Lord who saves and heals.

I am the Lord who saves and heals.

I am the Lord who saves and heals.

3 In you, O Lord, I put my trust.

In you, O Lord, I put my trust.

In you, O Lord, I put my trust.

Anonymous

Based on Psalm 46:10-11

Opening Prayer

God of all, through all time and in all places,
in each circumstance and season,
You call us together wherever we are
and welcome us with open arms
as your beloved children.
Each one of us is precious to you
and called by you.

In this time of great change and
uncertainty,
you are unchanging and ever faithful.
Through this time together,
let us feel you speaking to us,
leading us, teaching us,
Filling us with your spirit
and strengthening us for the journey
ahead.
Amen.

Prayer of adoration and thanksgiving

God of love and grace
we bring our thankful hearts to you,
acknowledging that without you
we are nothing
and with you we can be so much more.
We are thankful that you care for us,
and love us beyond measure;
that you have endless patience with us;
that you teach us time and time again
what it is to be committed to you
and your way. Amen.

Confession

Forgiving God,
help us to see our failings,
to see where we fall short,
to see where we deceive ourselves,
where we close our eyes and ears
to the ripples of our wrongdoing.
May we breathe in the reality of our
actions,
accept the need to change,
and know that as we come before you,
seeking forgiveness,
we breathe in the power of your
forgiveness,
and breathe out the need to live and love
your way, with your guiding hand to lead
us. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

We turn to the words of Paul, as he
teaches the Romans to be a bit more
considerate of each other, and definitely
more forgiving, and we will read it in a very
modern format,
from **The Message Bible**

Romans 14.1-12

Welcome with open arms fellow believers
who don't see things the way you do. And
don't jump all over them every time they
do or say something you don't agree with –
even when it seems that they are strong on
opinions but weak in the faith department.
Remember, they have their own history to
deal with. Treat them gently.

For instance, a person who has been
around for a while might well be convinced
that he can eat anything at the table, while
another, with a different background,
might assume he should only be a
vegetarian and eat accordingly. But since
both are guests at Christ's table, wouldn't
it be terribly rude if they fell to criticizing
what the other ate or didn't eat? God,
after all, invited them both to the table. Do
you have any business crossing people off
the guest list or interfering with God'
welcome? If there are corrections to be
made or manners to be learned, God can
handle that without your help.

Or, say, one person thinks that some days
should be set aside as holy and another
thinks that each day is pretty much like any
other. There are good reasons either way.
So, each person is free to follow the
convictions of conscience.

What's important in all this is that if you
keep a holy day, keep it for God's sake; if
you eat meat, eat it to the glory of God and
thank God for prime rib; if you're
vegetarian, eat vegetables to the glory of
God and thank God for broccoli. None of us
are permitted to insist on our own way in
these matters. It's God we are answerable
to – all the way from life to death and
everything in between – not each other.

That's why Jesus lived and died and then lived again; so that he could be our Master across the entire range of life and death, and free us from the petty tyrannies of each other. So where does that leave you when you criticize a brother? And where does that leave you when when condescend to a sister? I'd say it leaves you looking pretty silly – or worse. Eventually, we're all going to end up kneeling side by side in the place of judgement, facing God. Your critical and condescending ways aren't going to improve your position there one bit. Read it for yourself in scripture:

“As I live and breathe” God says,
“every knee shall bow down before me;
Every tongue will tell the honest truth
that I and only I am God”.

So tend to your knitting. You've got your hands full just taking care of your own life before God.

Reflection

I loved going to my great aunt and uncle's farm as a child; hill shepherds living high on the moor tops, where the farm yard was always full of Border Collies, ready to play. Inside the farm house though, there was an elderly, traditional Old English Sheepdog, who at the sight and sound of two lively children disappeared under the table, and growled if we went near. She didn't like change, she liked the quiet life with her elderly shepherds, not one with boisterous children in it.

I wonder, have you been able to speak to any children this week, now they are back at school. How are they coping with the

changes to their normal school day? My granddaughter has been at school during Lockdown, so has already adjusted, but I expect she's been called Miss Bossy Boots by someone this week, as she tries to teach her friends how they must now behave!

There are probably many teachers too, wanting to hide under the table and growl at the changes they now need to implement.

We don't like change. And the same is true in church. Perhaps you are reading this because you can't face Worship wearing a mask and where no singing allowed, so are quietly growling away on the inside, wanting to go back to how things were.

It was the same with the early church. The Jewish people who'd become believers in Jesus wanted to keep their old rituals, and certainly didn't want any Gentiles coming in with their strange ways. Gentile believers didn't see why they should adopt Jewish practices – Christ was leading them on a new Way surely?

Paul reminds them that Jesus was inviting them all to the table, and it is not their place to lay down the rules to another. And it's not about doing what they like either, as that could cause offence too.

Paul speaks of the judgement that all will face - whether at the table or under it – and reminds them that they are living in a new age, one that began with the resurrection of Jesus, and the important thing to do in this new age is to love one another, and support one another as they

gather to each bend their knee, and declare that there is only one Lord.

That same Lord Jesus is guiding us in a new age today, and we too have to adjust to different ways of worship that reaches all people, whether at home or in church. The important thing to remember is that we all still have access to the One Lord who leads by day and by night, guiding, teaching and he is one who never leaves us.

Amen.

StF 317

1 At the name of Jesus

every knee shall bow,
every tongue confess him
King of Glory now.

'Tis the Father's pleasure
we should call him Lord,
who from the beginning
was the mighty Word.

2 Humbled for a season,

to receive a name
from the lips of sinners
unto whom he came,
faithfully he bore it
spotless to the last,
brought it back victorious
when from death he passed:

3 Bore it up triumphant

with its human light,
through all ranks of creatures
to the central height,
to the throne of Godhead,
to the Father's breast;
filled it with the glory
of that perfect rest.

4 In your hearts enthrone him;
there let him subdue
all that is not holy,
all that is not true;
crown him as your captain
in temptation's hour:
let his will enfold you
in its light and power.

5 For this same Lord Jesus
shall return again,
with his Father's glory,
with his angel train;
all the wreaths of empire
meet upon his brow,
and our hearts confess him
King of Glory now.

Caroline Maria Noel (1817-1877)

A Prayer for Education Sunday

(perhaps you would like to say aloud the AMEN)

God did not leave His people
alone in the wilderness,
he stayed with them and led them on.
We are a learning people in a time of
change.

We pray for everyone who's just starting
school or nursery.
The God who has called you will lead you
on. AMEN

We pray for everyone who's going back to
school or college.
The God who has called you will lead you
on. AMEN

We pray for all those transitioning to secondary, to college, to university.
The God who has called you will lead you on. AMEN

We pray for teachers, tutors, lecturers and teaching assistants.
The God who has called you will lead you on. AMEN

We pray for parents, waiting anxiously at home.
The God who has called you will lead you on. AMEN

We pray for admin staff, catering staff, all who keep places of learning running smoothly.
The God who has called you will lead you on. AMEN

We pray for all who are adjusting to new circumstances, whatever they may be ...

Pause for personal reflection

The God who has called you will lead you on. AMEN

Let us feel you speaking to us, leading us, teaching us,
Filling us with your spirit and strengthening us for the journey ahead.
AMEN

StF 238

1 **Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us**
o'er the world's tempestuous sea;
guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,
for we have no help but thee,
yet possessing every blessing
if our God our Father be.

2 Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us;
all our weakness thou dost know,
thou didst tread this earth before us,
thou didst feel its keenest woe;
tempted, taunted, yet undaunted,
through the desert thou didst go.

3 Spirit of our God, descending,
fill our hearts with heavenly joy,
love with every passion blending,
pleasure that can never cloy;
thus provided, pardoned, guided,
nothing can our peace destroy.

James Edmeston (1791-1867)

Closing prayer

God did not leave His people alone in the wilderness,
he stayed with them and led them on.
Jesus said, Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.
We are a learning people in a time of change.
May the God who calls us, lead us on.

Blessing

May the blessing of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you now and always.
Amen.

Kathy Lowrie