



The Methodist Church
Ripon and Lower Dales
Circuit
Worship at Home 17th October 2021
Steve Laugher

Welcome to worship. Today we consider all that God has done for us and our response to him. The world adopts a very different approach to Jesus example, and the reading for today encourages us to think about who we put at the centre of our lives.

A video version of this service with hymns is available for you to use if you would like to follow with this written service

But before we start let us remind ourselves of how God see us.

Psalm 91 vs 14 - 16

*Those who love me, I will deliver;
I will protect those who know my name.
When they call to me, I will answer them;
I will be with them in trouble,
I will rescue them and honour them.
With long life I will satisfy them,
and show them my salvation.*

Hymn StF 88

1 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!

O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and salvation!

All ye who hear,
Brothers and sisters draw near,
Praise him in glad adoration.

2 Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;

Surely his goodness and mercy here daily attend thee;

Ponder anew
What the Almighty can do,
Who with his love doth befriend thee.

3 Praise to the Lord, who doth nourish thy life and restore thee,

Fitting thee well for the tasks that are ever before thee,

Then to thy need
He like mother doth speed,
Spreading the wings of grace o'er thee.

4 Praise to the Lord, who when darkness of sin is abounding,

Who, when the godless do triumph, all virtue confounding,

Sheddeth his light

Chaseth the horrors of night,

Saints with his mercy surrounding.

5 Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!

All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before him!

Let the amen

Sound from his people again:

Gladly for aye we adore him.

Prayer

We give you praise and worship your holy name. We ascribe to You the glory and honour that is due to You, for You are our God, You alone are our Creator our Lord and our Saviour, and You alone are deserving of our worship.

We worship You in the beauty of Your holiness and bow down before You in reverent praise, for You alone are worthy to receive all honour and glory and praise and blessing and worship.

Your power and Your majesty is seen throughout all the world, the works of Your hand are displayed in the heavens above, in the earth beneath and in the waters under the earth. You sit enthroned in circle of the heavens as our eternal King, and Your footstool is the foundation of the earth, which You have made. We are Your people, the sheep of Your pasture, and You are our God. We worship You.

You picked us up out of the miry clay and clothed us in Your own robe of righteousness. You cleansed us of our sins and will wipe away every tear from our eyes. You give strength to the weak, help to the oppressed, give food to the hungry and comfort to those that are suffering.

We bless You for our creation, preservation and all the blessings of this life, but above all we worship and thank You for sending Your Son to be our propitiation, our Saviour who washed away our sins with His own blood. Words cannot express the wonder of Your love and grace, and we worship You forever and ever and ever,

Reflection on today's reading

Upside Down Ambitions

Inner Peace, Inner peace. How many of you have seen the film Kung Foo Panda.

I really like the character of the teacher, HI name is Shifu, perhaps it is because I am at heart a teacher of people, desiring to help them be better, just like Shifu. But many times during the film you can find Shifu quietly uttering the mantra Inner Peace – Inner Peace.

Perhaps some thing we can all desire

Read Mark 10:35 – 45

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, 'Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.' And he said to them, 'What is it you want me to do for you?' And they said to him, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.' But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They replied, 'We are able.' Then Jesus said to them, 'The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.'

When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

In the short passage in Mark are bound together some lessons on how to achieve real inner peace.

James and John so much reflect the way of the world, then as now.

It's no wonder Jesus called them the 'Sons of Thunder' (no inner peace there) they were loud, ambitious, desiring to overcome and overthrow. I have no doubt that they also had a great deal of self belief and were convinced in their own hearts and minds that they were right nearly all the time.

The problem is that they always wanted more, quicker, better, bigger. They were ambitious

So they asked Jesus to give them an important place in the kingdom.

Now before we chastise James and John too much lets consider that to ask for such a place also meant that they believed such a thing would happen, that Jesus would be victorious and would be king (even though their understanding of what that would be was wrong).

I think that they honestly believed that they were the right people for the job, and so that led them to tell of their ambition.

Now can you and I be the same as James and John?

"Surely not", we may say. But when I think about it, I can be. In My prayers I can find myself telling God what I want Him to do rather than asking what does He want of me.

So sure that what I think is the right way that I am the best one to voice that, or be in a place to make it happen. So convinced that this is what is needed that I forget that others may see things differently, or may be even more right than I am.

You too?

In most worldly situations, greatness is measured in how much you are personally achieving, and the challenge comes in two ways: when we are trying to achieve more and more, and when in that achieving we desire to be seen to be achieving.

That is not the way to inner peace.

To James and John, no matter what they did, or achieved in their worldly lives or how good they were it wasn't their place to aim for being at Jesus Left and Right hand. Even Jesus Himself said to them it is not mine to decide. They were ambitious for the wrong thing.

Can you imagine how they felt after that conversation with Jesus. I am convinced that they would not have been feeling inner peace.

Jesus gave us all a different ambition, one that turns the idea of what to strive for upside down

"whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all."

This is a very different ambition.

In Christ's kingdom it is how much you serve that is key.

Now in serving you may find yourself at the top, in being a servant you may find yourself being a leader. That is OK and will be part of God's plan for you.

But to let your desire drive you to reach for the top, even if work you are doing seems to be the right thing will only hinder God and you too. And that will not give us the peace we seek; it will instead only cause frustration and disappointment.

James and John had the wrong target in sight. In fact, a target that was not even possible to attain. They were looking to some future idea, and because they were looking at this future ambition they were missing the real purpose that God has for them

What they should have been looking at was much closer to them than they knew. It was what God calling them to do in the NOW, making themselves available to Him so he can use them to serve those God places before them.

But if we seek to do God's will by taking on the way of the servant then we will find that our ambitions become aligned with God's purpose for us and in that we will find peace and contentment.

You see, there is a real purpose for each of us that is God made. You and I were built for this purpose.

Paul knew this as he made it clear in Ephesians Ch 2 vs 10.

Ephesians 2:10
For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

I keep coming back to this verse as it seems to unlock for me so much about purpose and what to be ambitious for.

And how do we find this true purpose to replace our own ambitions?

Jesus taught us to take on the way of the servant. And servants are responsive to the immediate need of their master.

The master says Go and get my coat, and the servant does just that. The master says make up my fire, so the servant makes up the fire. No thought to the reward if the fire is made, the purpose is just to do the will of the master.

God has already the good works in mind for us to do, all we have to do is respond to those opportunities as they come.

And in this journey, we are not alone. Jesus who went all the way to show true sacrifice and servanthood, sent His Holy Spirit to open our eyes to these opportunities. If we ask the Master – "How can I serve today", He will show you what to do.

That same Holy Spirit is the one who will give us the true reward for servanthood.

That reward is peace. Real peace. The peace that comes with knowing you are at one with God, Jesus in you and you in Him. The peace that comes with knowing you are about God's will.

The ambition to serve brings true inner peace.

Amen

Let's us pray together

Servant Lord
Teach us how to be ambitious for your ways
To be comfortable in the roles you have given us,
and to seek to gain only that which you plan for us.
In this way we as your servants know that we have reached the highest of places

Hymn StF 504

May the mind of Christ, my Saviour,
Live in me from day to day,
By His love and power controlling
All I do and say.

May the Word of God dwell richly
In my heart from hour to hour,
So that all may see I triumph
Only through His power.

May the peace of God my Father
Rule my life in everything,
That I may be calm to comfort
Sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me,
As the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self-abasing,
This is victory.

May I run the race before me
Strong and brave to face the foe,
Looking only unto Jesus
As I onward go.

Katie Barclay Wilkinson

Prayer of Intercession

As we offer our prayers for the world and for ourselves take a moment to allow for some times of silence, allowing us to reflect on the needs of others and on our own experiences.

As we reflect, it may be that God will speak into that silence and help us to understand the world and our lives in new ways.

Let us pray

We remember creation, breathed into life by God's Holy Spirit: places of beauty and brilliance, places of grandeur and spectacle, places of extravagant diversity.

We pray, creating God, for places damaged and degraded for people scraping a living from land made fruitless by human greed.

Silence

Help us to live sparingly and to care for creation.
Gracious God: Hear our prayer.

We remember humanity, breathed into life by God's Holy Spirit: people of beauty and brilliance, people of gifts and grace, people of extravagant diversity.

We pray, healing God, for people whose lives are diminished because they live with their own or challenges; for people facing the stigma caused by misunderstanding about illness; for people struggling to find help when they need it.

Silence

Help us to be welcoming, helpful and more aware of those things that make for mental well-being for others and ourselves.
Gracious God: Hear our prayer.

We remember the Church, breathed into life by God's Holy Spirit: a community of beauty and brilliance a community of love and compassion a community of extravagant diversity.

We pray, inspiring God, for denominations working out how to be one family, offering an effective witness to your love in the world; for churches with projects that offer others as part of their service to you; for ourselves and people in our own families and community who need to be understood, accepted and loved.

Silence

Help us to be willing to change ourselves and inspired to change the world. Gracious God: Hear our prayer.

In the name of Christ. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven
Hallowed be thy name
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done 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 StF 415

The Church of Christ in every age

Beset by change but Spirit led,
Must claim and test its heritage
And keep on rising from the dead.

Across the world, across the street,
The victims of injustice cry
For shelter and for bread to eat,
And never live until they die.

Then let the servant Church arise,
A caring Church that longs to be
A partner in Christ's sacrifice,
And clothed in Christ's humanity.

For he alone, whose blood was shed,
Can cure the fever in our blood,
And teach us how to share our bread
And feed the starving multitude.

We have no mission but to serve
In full obedience to our Lord:
To care for all, without reserve,
And to spread his liberating Word.

Blessing

As we learn to serve may we each know the blessings that comes doing His works, and showing His ways, and in that serving may others come to know the same love that you gave to us.

And so let us now go and serve the world in the way Jesus guided us all.

Amen