

## Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist Circuit

### Worship at Home 29<sup>th</sup> August 2021

#### Worship from the heart

In today's service we hear Jesus and James teach us that how we live matters, that our words and actions are important for living within a supportive and healthy community.

#### Call to worship

Unchanging God,  
refresher, healer and restorer,  
give us wisdom and discernment today.  
We come to seek you and to hear you,  
to be still and present with you,  
to be transformed.  
Let us meet with Jesus,  
who accepts us – flaws and all –  
with forgiveness and grace. **Amen**

#### Hymn StF 102

- 1 For the beauty of the earth,  
for the beauty of the skies,  
for the love which from our birth  
over and around us lies :  
*Gracious God, to you we raise  
this our sacrifice of praise.*
- 2 For the beauty of each hour  
of the day and of the night,  
hill and vale, and tree and flower,  
sun and moon and stars of light :
- 3 For the joy of ear and eye,  
for the heart and mind's delight,  
for the mystic harmony  
linking sense to sound and sight :
- 4 For the joy of human love,  
brother, sister, parent, child,  
friends on earth, and friends above,  
pleasures pure and undefiled :
- 5 For each perfect gift and sign  
of your love so freely given,  
graces human and divine,  
flowers of earth and buds of heaven :

Folliott Sandford Pierpoint (1835–1917)

#### Prayers of adoration and confession

Father of light, Father of truth and wisdom,  
we worship you and adore you.  
Let our light shine through you in the

darkness, most merciful and gracious God.

Thank you, Lord, for our communities.  
Thank you that you have set us where you  
want us to be.

Thank you for those who support us and  
that you give us strength to help each other.  
Thank you that we can work together to make  
our communities the places you want them to  
be.

Thank you for the strength to be doers and  
hearers of the word.

Thank you that every perfect gift is from you.

Unblemished God, forgive us  
when we adhere to laws that are not of you,  
when we criticise others because their ways  
are not our ways.

**Cleanse our hearts and make us pure.**

When we have not supported one another in  
love, or protected those that are vulnerable.

**Cleanse our hearts and make us pure.**

When we have corrupted your laws and gone  
our own way, or when we have not nurtured  
those in our families and communities and let  
them go astray.

**Cleanse our hearts and make us pure.**

Help us to live as one community,  
bound together in love and grace.

**Help us to live alongside each other  
and be there for one another. Amen.**

Thank you, O God, that we are a forgiven  
people, cleansed and restored by you,  
made pure in your image.

Today we are free because of your Son, Jesus,  
our Saviour who died on a cross, and who now  
lives forever more. **Amen.**

#### Bible Readings

##### Mark 7: 1-8

<sup>1</sup> The Pharisees and some of the teachers of  
the law who had come from Jerusalem  
gathered around Jesus <sup>2</sup> and saw some of his  
disciples eating food with hands that were  
defiled, that is, unwashed. <sup>3</sup> (The Pharisees  
and all the Jews do not eat unless they give

their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. <sup>4</sup> When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.) <sup>5</sup> So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?” <sup>6</sup> He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. <sup>7</sup> They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’ <sup>8</sup> You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.”

### **James 1:17-27**

<sup>17</sup> Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. <sup>18</sup> He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created. <sup>19</sup> My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, <sup>20</sup> because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. <sup>21</sup> Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. <sup>22</sup> Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. <sup>23</sup> Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror <sup>24</sup> and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup> But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it— not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do. <sup>26</sup> Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. <sup>27</sup> Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and

widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

### **Word**

Because of Covid, we are all regularly washing hands more, and have been encouraged to do this for the length it takes to sing 'Happy Birthday' or some other short tune. You may have done that for a while at the start, but I expect you haven't made it a life long tradition! Jesus took the Pharisees to task, because their focus was on following man-made traditions such as cleansing and not eating prohibited foods. They had so many rules and regulations that 10 important ones got overlooked – the ten commandments from God. By spending so much much time telling others what they should or shouldn't do, being critical and self-righteous, they weren't teaching how to love one another and therefore weren't taking care of those in need in their community – the widows, the orphans, the sick. In fact not even their own family.

Jesus will continue by saying that it is not what goes into a body that is unclean, but what comes out of the heart that makes a person unclean. Evil thoughts, unkind or angry words, greed, lust, theft, all these bad things are not avoided just because you washed your hands in a ritualistic way, or ate the right food. What needs to be taken into ourselves regularly, is the Word of God, inwardly digested, then it will come out in our words of love and care, followed by our actions of compassion and seeking justice. But it is easy for us to become critical of others, we can become as hypocritical as the Pharisees if we aren't careful.

James teaches us that we need to control ourselves, be quick to listen, think before we speak, be patient and slow to anger. How do we do this? Begin by taking in the word of God; read our Bibles, listen attentively to our preachers (we do appreciate that!), but we need to do more than just listen. James gives this image of a man seeing himself in a mirror - remember in those days very few people

would have one, so he looks closely at himself for a while, but then forgets what he looks like shortly afterwards. We can become a Nominal Christian if we only listen in church on Sunday, but don't follow through in our actions on Monday to Saturday. We can all too soon forget, when we think of the things that aren't from God – our worldly life takes over. James continues by saying that if we regard ourselves as religious, but don't control our tongue, we are deceiving ourselves. Do you remember chanting "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me" in a school playground? We teach children this, but it's not actually true. A broken bone is quickly mended these days, but a hurtful comment, or constant put-downs, especially in a bullying way, can cause life long damage.

It's all too easy to say the wrong thing, even when we are trying to help, but if we listen more first, then our more carefully chosen words can be much more meaningful. And then our love, compassion and care – those Christian values we aspire to, will be visible. James speaks of God accepting our religion – in other words, our belief in Him, as being pure and faultless if our words are followed by actions that match – looking after orphans and widows in their distress, James tells those early Christians.

For us today, following Jesus' ethical and moral teaching, can mean even more work – from considering how our purchases effect climate change, sustainable farming and fair trade, to helping our immediate neighbours in need, or to supporting charities around the world. Not forgetting praying for all these, and for areas of severe poverty, famine and war. We can feel that is a large ask, but perhaps there is an issue close to your heart that you feel you could speak up about, support with a gift of time or money – and pray for over the next week or two.

You could even demonstrate that your faith is positive and joyful by the simple act of smiling to everyone you meet, asking how they are – and listen carefully to their reply, without

comment or advice, and offering to pray for them if that seems appropriate.

Can you take the time to show that your heart is full of Christ's love this week. Amen.

### Hymn 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)

### Prayers for Others

Holy God, make us holy,  
give us power to resist evil,  
Give us strength to do what is right.

We pray for the church

working in areas of hatred,  
Where Christians face hostility and violence,  
Where to become a Christian is to risk loss  
and rejection.

**Holy and Strong One, Hear our prayer.**

Protect, O Lord, all who are working  
for liberty and freedom,  
All who are risking their lives  
for justice and peace.  
We pray for all the peace-makers  
and peace-keepers,  
For all who seek to reconcile divided  
communities or peoples.

**Holy and Strong One, Hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who have become bankrupt or  
who are in great debt;  
All the world's poor,  
All who have nothing to call their own.  
God of love, we pray for all homes  
where love has grown cold,  
And all being treated with contempt,  
humiliation or exploitation

**Holy and Strong One, Hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who have suffered  
a heart attack or stroke,  
All who are feeling broken-hearted because of  
the circumstances of their life today,  
For all betrayed by a loved one or friend;  
Lord, we pray that we may never  
take anyone for granted,  
That we may not misuse  
the power and freedom we have.

**Holy and Strong One, Hear our prayer.**

Make clean our hearts, O God,  
and renew a spirit within us,  
That we may seek and serve you  
in joy and gladness  
And bring others into the glory of your love;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you  
and the Holy Spirit, one God forever. Amen.

Bless our loved ones departed who are now  
renewed and restored to fullness,  
to the fullness of life and are  
inheritors with the saints in light;

May we share with them in the glory  
that is to come.

**Holy and strong One, Hear our prayer.**

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Lord's Prayer**

Our Father ...

**Hymn 706**

- 1 Longing for light, we wait in darkness.  
Longing for truth, we turn to you.  
Make us your own, your holy people,  
light for the world to see.  
*Christ, be our light!*  
*Shine in our hearts.*  
*Shine through the darkness.*  
*Christ, be our light!*  
*Shine in your Church gathered today.*
- 2 Longing for peace, our world is troubled.  
Longing for hope, many despair.  
Your word alone has power to save us.  
Make us your living voice.
- 3 Longing for food, many are hungry.  
Longing for water, many still thirst.  
Make us your bread, broken for others,  
shared until all are fed.
- 4 Longing for shelter, many are homeless.  
Longing for warmth, many are cold.  
Make us your building, sheltering others,  
walls made of living stone.
- 5 Many the gifts, many the people,  
many the hearts that yearn to belong.  
Let us be servants to one another,  
making your kingdom come.

Bernadette Farrell (b. 1957)

**Sending out prayer**

Lord, go with us into our everyday lives,  
to honour you in all that we do and say.  
May our being and doing  
reflect your love and your grace.  
And when we next meet,  
may we recognise with thanks  
the prompting of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

Kathy Lowrie