



Ripon & Lower Dales Methodist Circuit
With God in the City, Towns, Villages and rural areas

**Worship at home for the week beginning
Sunday 5th February 2023**

Being salt and light, let God be seen in your life.

O taste and see that the LORD is Good; happy are those who take refuge in him. (*Psalm 34:8*)

Welcome to this time of worship where you are;
Welcome to this time of worship how you are;
Welcome to this time of worship who you are.
As God welcomes you, may you welcome God to speak and Minister into your heart and mind.

Let us pray.

Almighty and ever-loving God, we come to worship you just the way we are because we cannot come any other way. With open hearts and minds, we come to praise You, for You are good. Please help us to worship you with all our senses that we might, hear, see, feel and by the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit know you with us. Amen.

Be still and know that I am God. (StF 18)

Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.

I am the Lord who saves and heals.
I am the Lord who saves and heals.
I am the Lord who saves and heals.

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

**The Gospel according to Matthew [ch.5:v13-16]
Salt and Light**

'You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Let us pray.

Almighty, most merciful God, Jesus taught us how to love You, others and self, but we have failed to live love like Jesus. We have prevented our light from shining before others and hidden it under a basket. We are sorry for allowing fear to distort our faith; we are sorry for allowing ungodly behaviour to distort our witness and good works. For all the times we have not brought glory to You, we are sorry and seek Your forgiveness through Jesus who took upon himself all that separates us from You. We thank you for Jesus who offers forgiveness through his sacrifice and victory over sin and death to all who truly repent. Amen.

Lord, the light of your love is shining (StF 59)

Lord, the light of your love is shining,
in the midst of the darkness, shining:
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us;
set us free by the truth you now bring us --
shine on me, shine on me.

*Shine, Jesus, shine,
fill this land with the Father's glory;
blaze, Spirit, blaze,
set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow,
flood the nations with grace and mercy;
send forth your word,
Lord, and let there be light!*

Lord, I come to your awesome presence,
from the shadows into your radiance;
by your blood I may enter your brightness:
search me, try me, consume all my darkness --
shine on me, shine on me.

chorus

As we gaze on your kingly brightness
so our faces display your likeness,
ever changing from glory to glory:
mirrored here, may our lives tell your story --
shine on me, shine on me.

chorus

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)
(c) 1987, Graham Kendrick / Make Way Music Ltd

Reflection

Recently I had been invited to help two classes of year one school children explore the question, 'where is God?' The children had each created a painting to express their belief in answering the question. The paintings were excellent, it was clear each child had put a lot of effort into their A4 masterpieces. I spent time going from child to child and speaking with them about their paintings and why they believe the place they had painted is where God is. The answers conveyed through their artwork and accompanying written work was fantastic. They ranged from nature because God made nature, to in my heart because God lives in me. They had rainbows and whole worlds, lights because Jesus is the light of the world. From the majesty of God is everywhere to the personal God is with me, these children gave a tremendously bold and colourful response to this questioned ask to them. Theology was being engaged in these classrooms of young children.

You might be wondering if any of the children painted a church in their answers. Well, a couple of children did a painting of a church. I wonder if you were given a paint brush and paints, what answer would you give on a canvas. I am greatly encouraged by how thoughtfully I see children engage with God through lessons, creative prayer times and in their school collective worship times.

Perhaps for some people the question, where is God? Isn't a question that ever comes to mind and for others the question might be asked in response to their lived experience of trauma, or loss, or from witnessing evil actions in the world. Typically, when I have heard this question asked in wider society, it is usually in response to gross devastating acts of evil like terrorists' attacks. The tone of the question can be dependant upon the belief or non-belief of who is asking it. Yet, the question asked by people across the ages was being asked in a classroom and wasn't met with any cynicism, nor was it asked with that tone.

It was asked plainly with an invitation to express belief and experience through artwork. Answering the question this way brought joy to those children, to their teachers and to me as I looked at their answers which they had painted. In a world that can sometimes feel to be full of darkness, we need more moments like this to give light, to reveal good works and compel glory to be given to God.

In our gospel reading Jesus talks about salt and light, and speaks plainly that if salt loses its taste, it becomes no longer good for anything. In a similar way, Jesus plainly points out the purpose of light, to be seen and to give light to enable others to see.

What therefore can we take away from this passage and apply to our Christian living?

Firstly, I would suggest that it is God who gives us our Christian flavour. That our taste and ability to flavour the world we live in comes from our relationship with God, through Jesus Christ. It is God living in us that make us distinctive. Salt is used in cooking to bring out the flavour of the food. It is also used as a preservative. If Christians are to be the salt of the earth, how might we bring out holy habits in others? I believe we do this through living out holy habits ourselves, but also by recognising such holiness in others. We can affirm others in their goodness and be people who encourage and nurture godly traits in others. What motivates someone to behave and act in good works will vary, but recognising it before God by our response is a way of bringing out more of that flavour. By being salt of the earth people in this way adds to preserving a witness to the character and person of God.

Secondly, I would suggest that it is living life inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit that enable us to be the light of the world. It Jesus living in us and us living like Jesus that enable us to be the light of the world. It is loving God with our all, putting God first in our lives. Further, it is bringing our devotion to our Heavenly Father through a worship shaped servant heart that is obedient to God's call on our lives.

We have all kinds of power sources today, a lamp as described by Jesus would have been made of clay, which held a well of oil that fuelled the wick to burn giving light for all in the house. Jesus the Light of the world is the source of our power, fuelling us so that we can let our light shine. We are to let people see Jesus living in us, let people see how much we love Jesus through how we love others through good works. And in all we do, may we do it to give God the glory.

I began by reflecting of a question that a classroom of children had been answering with their artwork. Where is God? I wonder, how might you answer this question through how you live your life. Might others see your good works as you let your light shine. Might others recognise God in you and may find God in those you meet. Amen.

Colours of day dawn into my mind (StF 167)

Colours of day dawn into the mind,
the sun has come up, the night is behind.
Go down in the city, into the street, and let's give
the message to the people we meet.

*So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
open the door, let Jesus return.
Take seeds of his Spirit, let the fruit grow,
tell the people of Jesus, let his love show.*

Go through the park, on into the town;
the sun still shines on; it never goes down.
The light of the world is risen again;
the people of darkness are needing a friend.
chorus

Open your eyes, look into the sky,
the darkness has come, the sun came to die.
The evening draws on, the sun disappears,
but Jesus is living, his Spirit is near.
chorus

Sue McClellan (b. 1951), John Paculabo (b. 1946) and Keith Rycroft (b. 1949)
(c) 1974, Thankyou Music

Prayers for others.

Our Godhead, three is one, we pray for Your Church throughout the world. We pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ who face persecution, those who are church in the margins and those who are boldly seeking you in fresh expressions church.

We pray for all who have recently come to faith and for those exploring faith.

Jesus, light of the world, may you shine in and through your Church that we all would shine for you.

Compassionate God, we pray for all those who are struggling due to the cost-of-living crises and for those living in poverty.

We pray for those without enough to eat and for those without the means to heat their homes. We pray for the homeless and displaced who have little relief from their despair.

Jesus, light of the world, may you shine in the lives of our broken and struggling world.

Merciful God, we pray for all who are living with physical and mental health illness. We pray for those in hospital and for those who are anxious.

We pray for those who are supporting, caring and providing medical help to all in need, remembering carers who are family members, young carers, and all healthcare professionals.

Jesus, light of the world, may you shine in the lives of all living with and caring for those in need.

God of love, you call us to love you and love each other, yet we continue to witness war and conflict in the world. We pray for the Ukraine who have endured great loss and devastation at the hands of their neighbour Russia.

We pray for Afghanistan and all places where violence is used to enforce ideologies being imposed at the detriment of lives.

Jesus, light of the world, may you shine in the places of great adversity. When it feels impossible to hope and darkness overwhelms, may your victorious love overcome the evil exercised.

God beyond time, eternal and perfect love, we pray for those who have been received into your merciful arms with all the saints in light. We thank you for their faithfulness in shining for you and for your goodness that filled their lives on earth.

We pray for those bereaved. May your peace bring comfort and strength to each in their sadness.

Jesus, light of the world, may you shine in all our lives, that we would see you and your salvation work in our midst. Amen.

Glory to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning and will be forever more.

The Spirit lives to set us free, walk, walk in the light (StF 397)

The Spirit lives to set us free,
walk, walk in the light;
he binds us all in unity,
walk, walk in the light.

*Walk in the light, walk in the light,
walk in the light, walk in the light of the Lord.*

Jesus promised life to all,
walk, walk in the light;
the dead were wakened by his call,
walk, walk in the light.

chorus

He died in pain on Calvary,
walk, walk in the light;
to save the lost like you and me,
walk, walk in the light.

chorus

We know his death was not the end,
walk, walk in the light;
he gave his Spirit to be our friend,
walk, walk in the light.

chorus

By Jesus' love our wounds are healed,
walk, walk in the light;
the Father's kindness is revealed,
walk, walk in the light.

chorus

The Spirit lives in you and me,
walk, walk in the light;
his light will shine for all to see,
walk, walk in the light.

chorus

Damian Lundy (1944-1996)
(c) 1978, Kevin Mayhew Ltd

A Blessing

I invite you say this pray of blessing.

May I go into this and each day of my life to love
and serve you Lord, my God.

May I always know you with me, that I would be
the kind of salt and light that Jesus described.

May I be empowered by your grace and peace, to
live out your grace and peace always.

May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy
Spirit, remain with us now and for ever. **Amen.**

Being **salt** and **light**, **let God been seen in your life.**

What would you paint in answering the
question, 'where is God?'