

Worship at Home Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist Circuit

Graham Pentelow 15.11.2020
"Transforming Lives"

Welcome

Welcome to worship. We join together to praise our God, to hear from Him, to learn and to grow. In the video version of this service, my welcome is filmed in my Stained Glass workshop. It is a place of restoration and transformation. What appears to be a dull and lifeless piece of glass, takes on a new life as the light shines through it. Ideas drawn on paper are transformed into reality on the workbench. Broken and damaged windows are restored to their former glory. Today we are thinking of how God works that transformation and restoration in our lives. But first, let us say together these verses from Psalm 9 (out loud if possible).

Psalm 9 v 1-2; 7-11

¹ I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart;
I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.

² I will be glad and rejoice in you;
I will sing the praises of your name, O Most High.

⁷ The Lord reigns forever;
He has established his throne for judgment.

⁸ He rules the world in righteousness
and judges the peoples with equity.

⁹ The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.

¹⁰ Those who know your name trust in you,
for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.

¹¹ Sing the praises of the Lord, enthroned in Zion;
proclaim among the nations what he has done.

Hymn StF 83

1 Praise, my soul, the King of heaven,
to his feet your tribute bring;
ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
who like you his praise should sing?
praise Him, praise Him,
praise the everlasting King.

2 Praise him for his grace and favour
to our fathers in distress;
praise him, still the same as ever,
slow to chide and swift to bless;
praise Him, praise Him,
glorious in his faithfulness.

3 Father-like, he tends and spares us,
All our hopes and fears he knows;
in his hands he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes:
praise Him, praise Him,
widely as his mercy flows.

4 Angels, help us to adore him;
ye behold him face to face;
sun and moon, bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space.
praise Him, praise Him,
praise with us the God of grace.
Henry Francis Lyte

Prayer

"Magnificent, marvellous, Matchless love;
too vast and astounding to tell
Forever existing in worlds above,
now offered and given to all."

We thank you Heavenly Father for your great love
and your grace and mercy offered freely to all.
We honour You for Your might and faithfulness.
Strong yet gentle.
Rock and redeemer.

Who can describe your greatness?
Who can do justice to your qualities?
Our words are inadequate, and yet we come,
In humility and at your invitation, into your presence.

We ask forgiveness for our failings.
We ask forgiveness for the many times
we fall short of your hopes in us.

And as we meet for this short time of worship,
shared together over time and space,
open our hearts and our minds to your way for us.
Reveal your word, and refresh our spirits we pray.
Amen

Reading

2 Corinthians 3 v 12-18

¹² Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. ¹³ We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away. ¹⁴ But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. ¹⁶ But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

¹⁸ *And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

Holy Bible NIV C 1973, 1978, 1984
The International Bible Society

Reflection - Transforming Lives

It begins with God. The walk in the garden and a close relationship with Mankind.

To me, one of the most poignant episodes in the whole of the bible is Adam and Eve hiding from God in shame, and God calling for them "Where are you?".

Of course, He knew where they were, but He needed them to speak the words and to own their actions.

What begins as a perfect relationship, a union of Spirits, from that point spirals downwards into a struggle of conscience and desire. Desire for an earthly satisfaction that we have created as a replacement for God, and a Conscience that tells us that there is a better way.

Deep in the heart of every person is that instinctive knowledge that there is something missing. What research shows, is that here in the West, despite religious adherence being at an all time low, the majority of people still believe in God (or a higher being), life after death, the power of prayer, and in basic goodness.

So, within us is a gaping void. A void that aches to be filled and yet is never seemingly satisfied because it is a void that can only be filled by a relationship with God.

Within each one of us is a relationship waiting to be restored.

There is a programme on the Television – so popular that it moved from a sleepy afternoon slot to prime time. It's called "The repair shop". In this programme people bring their broken, battered, tatty but treasured items, and the specialist team set to put it right again. It's called the Repair Shop, but really it should be called the Restoration Shop, because that is really what happens. Things are returned to their former glory and usefulness. It can be quite moving to see people's reactions when re-united with their restored treasures.

God is in the business of Restoration. And just as God called in the garden, He is calling us still. "Where are you?". Can you imagine the joy in His heart to be able to restore each individual soul to our true relationship with Him.

God is in the business of Transformation. Jesus shows us the way. And we start by seeking.

Jesus tells stories of Lost and Found. Lost coins, lost sheep, lost Sons, but also of Found coins, Found sheep and Found Sons. What is most striking about these stories, is the Joy that is experienced when what is lost has been found again.

The Joy is not only the joy of the finder, but the joy in heaven and in the Father heart of God.

It isn't difficult to make that connection that the seeking is the seeking after God and His Kingdom. The prophet Jeremiah speaks of *God - "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,"*

And so we seek. We look upward. We look to a higher plane. We look to the things of God, and indeed to God himself.

And we do this through Jesus, who died in order that all this might be possible. Jesus is the means whereby we can be restored to God.

We can come to the Father with confidence, because of the way opened for us by Jesus.

Song StF 367

1 When I was lost you came and rescued me,
reached down into the pit and lifted me.
Oh Lord, such love;
I was as far from you as I could be.

2 You know all the things I've ever done,
but Jesus' blood has cancelled every one.
Oh Lord, such grace
to qualify me as your own.

Chorus...

*There is a new song in my mouth,
there is a deep cry in my heart,
a hymn of praise to Almighty God – Alleluia!
And now I stand firm on this Rock,
my life is hidden now with Christ in God,
the old has gone and the new has come –
Alleluia!*

Your love has lifted me.

3 Now I have come into your family,
for the Son of God has died for me.
Oh Lord, such peace;
I am as loved by you as I could be.

4 In the full assurance of your love,
now with every confidence we come.
Oh Lord, such joy
to know that you delight in us.

Chorus...

*Kate Simmonds, Miles Simmonds
Thankyou music 2001*

Transformation

When an object is being restored, it often has to be dismantled, all the unusable bits replaced before it can be made perfect again. It's a process of "transformation".

And so it is with us.

Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians says "*And we all, who with unveiled faces reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His image with an ever increasing glory which comes from the Lord, who is Spirit.*"

Two things to note here.

Firstly -

Transformation, in this case, is a gradual and continual process.

What this means for you and me is that transformation isn't instantaneous, but is a gradual thing. For many of us that is a relief, as we probably feel we have a long way to go. Well don't worry, because God hasn't finished with us yet, and he never gives up on us.

Secondly -

That we are being transformed "into his image". We might, quite understandably, find that a bit scary. Overwhelming even. Some might be afraid that God will change them in a way they won't be comfortable with.

Well don't worry, we don't stop being who we are. It's more that we become the fulfilment of our true selves. As the old saying goes, "we become the person God made us to be".

As Max Lucado says, "Let God live long enough in a heart and that heart will begin to transform...This might explain some of the discomfort in your life. Remodelling of the heart is not always pleasant. God envisions a complete restoration. He won't stop until he is finished and until we have been shaped **'along the lines of his Son'** (Rom 8 v 29 Msg). God is remaking you into the image of Christ."

A prayer of response

Thank you Lord, for your work of restoration.
Thank you that you care for each one of us,
as a loving father to a child.

Thank you that you long to bring each
one of us back to the place that we belong,
and to transform us into your likeness.

Help us to look to you at all times.

Help us to seek you out;

To look above the mundane world,
to the glorious treasure of knowing you.

In Jesus' name.

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 504

May the mind of Christ my Saviour

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

A footnote.

The act of transformation doesn't just stop with one individual. It spreads, in fact – to be topical, transformation is contagious.

As we as individuals are transformed by God, our Churches are changed. More than that, they too are transformed. And as our churches are transformed, our communities are transformed.

But it begins with God.

Seek and you will find. If you seek me with all your heart, I *will* be found.

Blessing

Let lockdown be changed to "look up",
Seek His presence, His purpose, His way,
Let's trust Him, His plans and His timing,
And live life to the full every day.

*From a poem by Rachel Loesher
A chapel worshipper from Gloucester*

Points to Ponder for the week ahead:-

How can I get to know God more?
Do I seek Him?
Am I willing to be transformed?