



The Methodist Church

Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist Circuit:

Worship at Home – 30 January 2022

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Wherever you are sharing in this act of worship, you are welcome.

A Call to Worship: the beginning of Psalm 67

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations.

Hymn:

Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire
and lighten with celestial fire;
thou the anointing Spirit art,
who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart.

Thy blessed unction from above
is comfort, life, and fire of love;
enable with perpetual light
the dullness of our mortal sight.

Teach us to know the Father, Son,
and thee, of both, to be but one;
that through the ages all along
this may be our endless song:

Praise to thine eternal merit,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Loving God, we thank You for Your constant guidance in our lives and for all the ways You encourage, challenge, strengthen and renew us. We thank You that we still hear Your quiet words whispering to us in the silence of our own hearts.

We thank You that through song, prayer, preaching, worship, mission and service, we are still able to hear Your voice.

Through fellowship and community, we can feel Your presence in what we do and say.

We thank You that when we see the fields of corn and hear the birds singing, we are hearing You and when the wind blows, we feel You.

We thank You that through Christ's life, work, teaching, death and resurrection You speak to us and that Your Holy Spirit inspires, comforts and empowers us each day.

We thank You for the times we have felt lost and have felt Your hand take hold of us and lead us forward – through difficulties, life problems and illnesses.

We thank You for Your healing touch. Be with us now, directing our ways so that we may glorify You in all that we do and say.

Amen

Reading: Luke 4: 21 - 30

²¹ He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

²² All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” they asked.

²³ Jesus said to them, “Surely you will quote this proverb to me: ‘Physician, heal yourself!’ And you will tell me, ‘Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’”

²⁴ “Truly I tell you,” he continued, “no prophet is accepted in his hometown. ²⁵ I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah’s time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. ²⁶ Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. ²⁷ And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.”

²⁸ All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. ²⁹ They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. ³⁰ But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

Hymn:

Speak, O Lord, as we come to You
To receive the food of your holy word.
Take Your truth, plant it deep in us;
Shape and fashion us in Your likeness,
That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us
All Your purposes, for Your glory.

Teach us Lord full obedience,
Holy reverence, true humility.
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
In the radiance of Your purity.
Cause our faith to rise
Cause our eyes to see,
Your majestic love and authority.
Words of power that can never fail;
Let their truth prevail over unbelief.

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us.
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time,
That will echo down through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on Your promises;
And by faith we'll walk as You walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, 'til your church is built
And the earth is filled with Your glory.

Reflection

I was talking someone recently who reminded me of a story of a congregation turning up to a first service with their new minister. The congregation was full of expectation but the new minister was nowhere to be seen. The only the only person that was to be seen was a homeless person curled up just outside the front door asleep. As the service began it was announced that the minister hadn't turned up, when low and behold the homeless person walked up to the front, laid their sleeping back down and took off their coat to reveal themselves as the new minister. The congregation were shocked, and guilty that they had all ignored their sleeping homeless guest.

Our gospel reading today reminds us that God works in unexpected places. Jesus is in Nazareth, and people can't believe it is Joseph's son. Jesus talks of how a prophet is not welcome in their hometown. Not welcome in their familiar surroundings. The words familiar and family come from the same Latin root, as words talking about the known and the intimate. It seems that here Jesus sows the seed that God may well call us out of our known and comfortable places to the unfamiliar and unexpected.

As the reading goes on, Jesus talks of God's provision for Zarephath (1 Kings 17) and Naaman (2 Kings 5), both people who were deemed at the time to be 'outside' of the community of God's people.

Believe me, it isn't easy to preach to the church you grew up in. I grew up in a small village church where everyone was related to me. So preaching there, and I went on note as a local preacher aged 18, was horrific. My late mother, who was my biggest critic, used to hide under the pew and then when we got home she'd say "why did you pick that hymn?" and "what did you say that for?" and "you went on a bit long!" I wasn't exactly hurled over a cliff but it wasn't a very happy experience. Much easier to be honest and challenging to people you don't know.

God is working his purpose out – there will be good news for the poor, sight for the blind, release for captives, freedom for the oppressed, the breaking in of God's time, whether we are part of it, or not. Luke writes how well all spoke of him and how amazed they were at the gracious words he spoke. He was one of their own, welcomed and celebrated and given thanks for. If only Jesus had left it there, if he had been content to promise blessings for the inner circle, read the Scriptures and not be controversial.

But had he done that, the job would only have been half finished. He had soothed people but needed to challenge them too. He had recognised and celebrated life, but needed his listeners to take responsibility and to change, and needless to say, those same people who had spoken well of Him then drove Him out of the town with the plan to hurl him off the cliff.

The danger is we have no time to see God's Spirit moving or we are too exhausted to see it! God is ahead of us and we need to enlarge our vision. That Nazareth assembly didn't like it and they kicked Jesus out. What about us? We can try being church without Jesus, but we won't last long.

Prayers of Intercession

Almighty and everlasting God, You are strength to those who suffer and comfort to those who grieve. Let the prayers of your children who are in trouble rise to you.

Hear our prayer.

We claim your promises of wholeness as we pray for those who are ill or are suffering loss and long for your healing touch.

Hear our prayer.

Make the weak strong, the sick healthy, the broken whole, and confirm those who serve them as agents of your love.

Hear our prayer.

To everyone in distress, grant mercy, grant relief, grant refreshment.

Hear our prayer.

We commend our neighbourhoods to your care. Give us strength of purpose and concern for others, that we may create a community where your will may be done.

Hear our prayer.

God of compassion, you watch our ways, and weave out of terrible happenings wonders of goodness and grace.

Hear our prayer.

Surround those who have been shaken by tragedy with a sense of your present love, and hold them in faith. Though they are lost in grief, may they find you and be comforted;

Through Jesus Christ who was dead, but lives and rules this world with you. Amen

Hymn:

Lord of creation, to you be all praise!

Most mighty your working, most wondrous your ways!

Your glory and might are beyond us to tell,

and yet in the heart of the humble you dwell.

Lord of all power, I give you my will,
in joyful obedience your tasks to fulfil.

Your bondage is freedom, your service is song;

and, held in your keeping, my weakness is strong.

Lord of all wisdom, I give you my mind,
rich truth that surpasses man's knowledge to find.
What eye has not seen and what ear has not heard
is taught by your Spirit and shines from your Word.

Lord of all bounty, I give you my heart;
I praise and adore you for all you impart;
your love to inspire me, your counsel to guide,
your presence to cheer me, whatever betide.

Lord of all being, I give you my all;
if ever I disown you, I stumble and fall;
but, led in your service your word to obey,
I walk in your freedom to the end of the way.

May the peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts
and minds in the knowledge of Christ our Lord, and the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. Amen.