



The Methodist Church

Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist Circuit Worship at Home – 19 March 2023

Today is Mothering Sunday family members who had gone away to work would return home to spend a day with their family, and Lenten food rules would be relaxed so everyone would have a special meal together. And this day was not just for biological families, but for people to return to their home church to get together as the family of God.

Hymn 72

Father God, I wonder
How I managed to exist
Without the knowledge of Your parenthood
And Your loving care.
But now I am Your child,
I am adopted in Your family,
And I can never be alone
Cause, Father God,
Your'e there beside me.

I will sing Your praises,
I will sing Your praises,
I will sing Your praises forever more.
I will sing Your praises,
I will sing Your praises,
I will sing Your praises forever more,

Prayer of praise

I long to gather you safely under my wings,
as a mother hen gathers her chicks, says
the Lord.
Loving God, we give you thanks that you
love and protect us, gathering us to your
very self.
As a mother comforts her child, so will I
comfort you, says the Lord.
We thank and praise you that you, the God
of the universe, care for each one of us;
that you reach out to us in love and comfort.
We praise your name forever. **Amen.**

A prayer of confession

Forgiving God, Parent of us all, you give us
hope even when there appears to be no
hope.

You have faith in us even when we destroy
what you have created.
Even when in guilt and shame we are
unable to face ourselves,
You look upon us as your children.
You alone can change us from glory to glory
and make us fit for your presence.
We have spoiled the good things you have
given us.
We have tainted with our selfish touch the
blessings you would share with all.
Gifts you have given lie damaged and
broken.
We come to you, our God who redeems and
restores.
Heal us, we pray. Heal the results of our
selfish attitudes and actions,
That we, and all your people, may know
your peace.
I am making all things new, says the Lord.
This is Christ's gracious word: your sins are
forgiven. **Thanks be to God. Amen.**

Lord's Prayer.

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your
name,
Your kingdom come, Your will be done, On
earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins As we forgive those who
sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial And deliver us
from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory
are Yours, Now and for ever, **Amen.**

Hymn 531

What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations,
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged:
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness:
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour, still our refuge-
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
Do your friends despise, forsake you?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
In His arms He'll take and shield you,
You will find a solace there.

Reading Luke 2 v25-35

²⁵ At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him ²⁶ and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷ That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, ²⁸ Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying, ²⁹ "Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised.

³⁰ I have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared for all people.

³² He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!"

³³ Jesus' parents were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby's mother, "This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, and many others to rise. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him. ³⁵ As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul."

Talk

A devout man called Simeon had been promised by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen God's anointed king, so he spent as much time in the Temple praying and worshipping God as he could.

And he meets in the Temple, a poor young couple from a country village with their baby son, a little family, no one important, and Simeon recognises that God has fulfilled His promise, this baby is the long awaited Redeemer who will bring salvation.

Simeon takes this wonderful baby in his arms, and praising God for his revelation, calls Jesus a light for the Gentiles and a

glory for Israel. What an amazing thing to say about their son.

The first thing Simeon did was to praise God.

On this special day when we think of family life, if we, as Christians, begin everything with heartfelt recognition of God's mercy and encouragement;

we then look at people, family, neighbours, even those we dislike, differently and even in complaint and disagreement if we start with praising their good points not nagging criticism, who knows what could happen? So, Jesus' parents are amazed, what else will Simeon say?

He gives them truth, truth which is not easy. 'This child is destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel'

This is hard for Mary and Joseph, and for us. You see Jesus' coming brings judgement, because we are judged by our reaction to Jesus. As William Barclay says, "If, when we are confronted with His goodness and loveliness our heart responds in answering love, we are within the kingdom. If when so confronted we remain coldly unmoved or actively hostile, we are condemned."

Jesus accepts us just as we are because everyone is special to God. And we are called to do the same.

We are the family of God, we are the Church, the body of Christ in the world. Just like Simeon we all, as Christians have the gift of the Holy Spirit to help and guide us. The family of the Church is Spirit filled and so we can do the work God wants us to do and follow in the footsteps of His Son Jesus, who died to bring us Salvation.

Truth, not popularity

This is not easy or popular, Simeon said that Jesus would be "A sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed."

Jesus confronted people with truth, God's Truth, and so the leaders in His day, hated Him. Jesus was and still is a catalyst for change, a force for change, a challenge for authority and bigotry down the ages.

Jean Vanier founder of the L'arche communities for the handicapped said, "Following Jesus is not a matter of climbing the ladder of success and power, but walking down to discover the life of Jesus

hidden in the poor, the sick, the old and the disabled.”

Jesus' family

Jesus was born in a loving little family; you know it always impresses me how strong Mary was; I should imagine Jesus was not an easy child to bring up. After Simeon's prophecy it must have felt a bit like being handed a ticking bomb to bring up.

And let's hear it for Joseph, a righteous man before God, giving Mary strong loving support in her rearing of this very special child. Joseph was a carpenter or stonemason, these are professions which require patience, a hasty stroke ruining the work. Patience, definitely high on the shopping list of virtues needed for family life and patience for a Christian is not enduring with resignation, (Sigh), but a lively expression of faith, as patience and endurance through trouble leads to a deepening of our trust in God's love for us, as Simeon showed.

Trust

And Mary and Joseph would need patience and trust in God, loving and caring for this special child. Just try to imagine what it would be like, knowing that your son would grow up to be God's chosen redeemer, our Saviour; but also knowing at the back of your mind that Your precious son would face a death so terrible that the shock of it would be like a sword driven into your side. If the cross was always present with Jesus, then it was always present with Mary His mother too.

What is Parenting.

David Adam describes a Mother as one who provides food and shelter for their children, gives love and security and protects them. It is a joy, it is difficult and sometimes feels thankless. But the one who mothers can be either or both parents, Grandparents. Today is the day we say thank you to the person who mothered us, who was there when we needed them, who gave us that selfless love.

You know, even the best of children can be very difficult, and the middle of the night can be a lonely place with a screaming baby or child. But we are never alone.

God our Great creator is a God of love, always there for us, as only He can nurture

and answer both the troubled human parent and the frightened child within each of us. Jesus illustrated this self-giving love likening it to a hen gathering her chicks under the safety of her wings.

Parenting is not a pain-free process, and there is no pain-free life. But in sending his Son to live a human life and die on the cross, God showed us that he understands this and that he suffers beside us. But in the resurrection he showed, too, that Jesus conquered sin and death and has opened the way to God for everyone. As Easter approaches we have a new opportunity to enter into this mystery and celebrate what God has done for us.

Hymn 193

Born in the night, Mary's child
A long way from your home;
Coming in need, Mary's child,
born in a borrowed room.

Clear shining light, Mary's child
Your face lights up our way;
light of the world, Mary's child,
dawn on our darkened day.

Truth of our life, Mary's child,
you tell us God is good;
prove it is true, Mary's child,
go to your cross of wood.

Hope of the world, Mary's Child,
you're coming soon to reign;
King of the Earth, Mary's child,
walk in our streets again.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession by Michaela Youngson.

Mother, Father, God, loving parent, patient shaper of creation,
Nurturer of all creatures, lover of all people.
Thank You for parents, giving freely of their time, love and experience,
Shaping a new generation,
Offering themselves in the all-consuming challenge of parenthood.
Give energy and courage to all who bring up children,
Mothers, fathers, grandparents, foster carers, guardians and care agencies,
Give wisdom to those who shape the future by loving today.

We pray for those who find caring for children a struggle,
Mothers with post-natal depression, parents whose children are ill or hard to care for,
Fathers who feel excluded from family life.

We pray for those who remember their own childhoods with pain,
Those for whom the words 'father' or 'mother'
Bring memories of regret, hurt, injury, fear or anguish,
Those who remember only abuse, neglect, disapproval and anger.

We pray for those who choose to break the pattern of the past,
Those who work hard to build safe and loving homes,
Those who will not be chained to patterns of fear, abuse and regret,
Those who say, 'Things will be better for my children.'
Mother, Father, God, loving parent, patient shaper of all creation,
, the day when
Nurturer of all creatures, lover of all people:
hear our prayers. **Amen.**

God our Father, help us to express our joy and love as we praise your name each day. Help us to stop and look for your presence in every person that we meet. Enable us Lord to make every meeting one where your love is shared. Help us, we pray, to share your Spirit, love and joy in every gathering and conversation that we have today. Amen.

Hymn 103

God is Love: let heaven adore Him;
God is Love: let earth rejoice;
Let creation sing before Him,
And exalt Him with one voice.
He who laid the earth's foundation,
He who spread the heavens above
He who breathes through all creation,
He is Love, eternal Love.

God is Love, and He enfolding
All the world in one embrace,
With unfailing grasp is holding
Every child of every race.

And when human hearts are breaking
Under sorrows iron rod,
Then they find the self-same aching
Deep within the heart of God.

God is Love: and though with blindness
Sin afflicts each human soul,
God's eternal loving-kindness
Holds and guides and keeps them whole.
Sin and death and hell shall never
O'er us final triumph gain;
God is Love, so Love for ever
O'er the universe must reign.

Blessing

Generous God, Loving Parent, bless each one of us, bless those we love, bless the homes we return to,
Inspire us with Your Spirit, that we might grow deeper in wisdom,
More passionate in faith, more committed in loving,
For the sake of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**