



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

Worship at home – week beginning 21st
May 2023

Aldersgate Sunday

What if we are willing?

Welcome to this worship at home service which includes looking at John Wesley's transformative experience of the Holy Spirit. Looking forward, we pray for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to lead us daily.

**A prayer for Aldersgate Sunday By the
Revd Dr Martyn Atkins**

Let us pray.

Resourceful Holy Spirit of God, We thank you for your servants, John and Charles Wesley.

That you fuelled their zeal
and tempered it with divine grace;
brought them through dark times,
enlightened and renewed.

That you warmed their needy hearts,
assured and shaped them by your active
holiness.

That through their willingness, you worked
out Your purposes of hope, mercy, and
justice.

Somewhat daunted, we stand today in their
deep footsteps. In a world of new challenges
and old needs in a time like no other.

But undaunted, we humbly ask you to do in
us, what you did in and through them.

May we know both your infilling and
outpouring,
that whatever our situation or condition,
we will serve and honour Christ,
and in these, our days, know and believe
that the best of all is, "God is with us." **Amen.**

StF n°65 Sing of the Lord's goodness

¹Sing of the Lord's goodness, Father of all
wisdom, come to him and bless his name.
Mercy he has shown us, his love is for ever,
faithful to the end of days.

*Come then, all you nations,
sing of your Lord's goodness,
melodies of praise and thanks to God.
Ring out the Lord's glory,
praise him with your music,
worship him and bless his name.*

²Power he has wielded, honour is his
garment, risen from the snares of death.
His word he has spoken, one bread he has
broken, new life he now gives to all.

³Courage is our darkness, comfort in our
sorrow, Spirit of our God most high;
solace for the weary, pardon for the sinner,
splendour of the living God.

⁴Praise him with your singing, praise him with
the trumpet,
praise God with the lute and harp;
praise him with the cymbals, praise him with
your dancing, praise God till the end of days.

Ernest Sands (1949)
Words and Music © 1981 Ernest Sands.

**A prayer of adoration; confession and
thanksgiving.**

Loving God, by your goodness and grace,
you enable us to sing your praise;
you inspire us to praise you with music;
you give life to our movement and dance.

Lord God, you are worthy of all our
expression of praise and worship.
Our hearts and souls are full of adoration for
you, our creator and the one who sustains us.

Merciful Lord, for the times we have been
unwilling to let you lead us, and for times we
have followed our own way instead of the
way of the cross, we are sorry.
*In a moment of silence, let us confess our
sins to God.*

We are sorry and in repentance of our sins
turn to You Lord, trusting in your mercy and
grace to forgive us through Our Lord Jesus
Christ.

As forgiven people, we bring our prayers of thanksgiving to the glory of your holy name.

Holy God, abundant is your love, grace and goodness to us. We thank you for our relationship with You through Jesus, as your children and friend.

We thank you for all the loving and nurturing relationships we have in our lives. For family, friends and neighbours.

We thank you for Your living Word Jesus, who dwells within us by your Spirit.

We thank you for the life-giving love fuelled faith we have for the journey of life. Amen.

Romans 5: 1-11

Results of Justification

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Reflection

There are many standout moments in John Wesley's transformative Holy Spirit encounter at Aldersgate. The honest reflection John

Wesley gives of how unwillingly he attended the reading of Martin Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans is something I find intriguing on different levels.

Firstly, that whilst very unwillingly he went, he still went. What was it that helped John overcome his unwillingness to attend? Was it the impression of the Moravians had made on him whilst onboard the ship caught up in a severe storm. Did that event of witnessing the Moravians calm assurance, confident in God's love and knowing their salvation give John Wesley to drive to attend the society in Aldersgate Street, because it was a Moravian meeting.

John Wesley, aged thirty-five did attend however unwillingly and in doing so, received assurance of his own salvation which gave rise to a new boldness and courage to follow God's lead which saw the Methodist movement emerge, and ultimately The Methodist Church.

My further intrigue is that God did something despite the unwillingness of John to attend. I sometimes feel like we can find ourselves in one of two places in the life of the church. We can be willing but not able or we can be able but unwilling. This can leave us at times feeling frustrated, dejected, and disappointed, leading to disengagement, from church and even God. Yet how often do we see God active despite our inactivity or inept efforts.

Unwillingness isn't a problem unless we allow it to stop us being in the place God wants us to be. But what if we are willing to follow God leading. What if we are willing to follow the teaching of Jesus, properly willing without personal tweaks to best fits one's own preferences . What if we are willing, even when feeling unwillingly about doing something. I suggest this type of willingness comes under the banner of Christian discipline and obedience to God.

“Humanity and the whole creation would be doomed if emotions ruled the world.”

Feelings matter, they matter a lot and often feelings can be tremendously helpful. Sense danger or that something is quite right can make all the difference. But sometimes

feelings can be less helpful, for example the voice of anxiety, of idleness, or even of impatience speaks out the 'I don't feel like' expressions. Feelings in these situations are seeking to be in the driving seat and potentially steering us down the wrong roads.

The greatest commandment tells us to love God with all we have and that includes our emotions. This doesn't mean we rewrite what we are feeling or only love with what we might deem are the helpful emotions. It means we love God with our all, all our resources, all our time, all our energy, all our skills, all our thoughts, and all our feelings.

For a three-letter word, 'all' is pretty big one. Such love towards God is honest and real. It puts away the pretence and begins to nurture a daily living relationship with our loving God. Such honest and real engagement with God is how we can begin to better understand what is described in Romans chapter five, as we share not only in the glory of God but also in our sufferings. The faith described in Romans is not fair-weather faith, it is a faith which has the substance of the grace of God.

As the child in Sunday school that always gives Jesus as their answer to every question, when it comes to answering for how we can be reconciled with God the answer is Jesus everytime. John Wesley had a heart strangely warmed, affirmation and boost in his Christian confidence, that's putting it mildly. Yet this makes perfect sense when we properly consider the results of the victory of Jesus Christ over sin and death.

“Who but someone who loves you entirely would take your place, if that place was suffering and death.”

Jesus came to earth to reconcile us with God, and for our part we receive this gift. A gift which means we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This gift of grace, this free and undeserved gift still requires us to receive it. Of course, how we perceive our need or put another way, our openness to receive this gift of new life through, in and with Jesus can differ from person to person. What does not differ is how much God loves each and every person.

“What does not change is how much God loves you.”

We only ever come to God as we are because we can come no other way. Yet, the love and transforming power of God Holy Spirit in our lives means we are not left wanting or wandering lost. We are met by the embrace of a loving Father; we are assured of a place with God through Jesus and equipped for all ways we are called to serve.

My final intrigue around John Wesley's Aldersgate, heart strangely warmed transformative experience relates to how often this pivotal point in the history of the church is how romanticised it can sometimes be portrayed. What we need to pay attention too is the passionate fire that was lit in the heart of the thirty-five-year-old John Wesley. Such was that fire that he burnt brightly, preached boldly, made history that paved a way for emergence of The Methodist Church.

I believe God wants that same fire to burn brightly within the Church today. That a passionate fire would be for seeking the emergence of ever fresh expressions of God's love and loving God that is real and relevant for joining with God in mission in the world today. What if we are willing? Imagine.

StF n°345 And can it be that I should gain

¹And can it be that I should gain
an interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died he for me, who caused his pain?
For me, who him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

²'Tis mystery all: the Immortal dies!
Who can explore his strange design?
In vain the first-born seraph tries
to sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mystery all! Let earth adore.
let angel minds enquire no more.

³He left his Father's throne above –
so free, so infinite his grace –
emptied himself of all but love,
and bled for Adam's helpless race.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
for, O my God, it found out me!

⁴Long my imprisoned spirit lay
fast bound in sin and nature's night;
thine eye diffused a quickening ray –
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light,
my chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

⁵No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in him, is mine!
Alive in him, my living Head,
and clothed in righteousness divine,
bold I approach the eternal throne,
and claim the crown, through Christ, my own.
Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Praying for our neighbours, community and the world. (*offer prayers for the people and situations the Lord God has placed upon your heart*)

Blessed Lord God,
You so loved the world that you gave your only Son, that all can know salvation and be reconciled with you through Jesus. By your Holy Spirit aid, us in our prayers for our world. We pray for our neighbours and all who make up our local community according to their needs. We pray for those who are feeling lonely; for those struggling to afford food and the costs of living. We pray for those who are anxious and those who are bereaved.

May compassion, care and friendship be the hallmarks of our neighbourhoods and communities.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for our world and our human family which is in constant need of your grace and mercy. We pray for those who are displaced from their homes and whose lives have been devastated by war, conflict and natural disasters. We pray for those who are clinging onto hope in the face of danger and the struggles of daily living. We pray for those who strive for justice and peace.

May compassion, justice and peace building be the hallmarks of our world. We pray for your healing in our brokenness.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for your Church throughout the world. We thank you for Church family we know and love locally and we thank you for our place within your worshipping community of faith. We pray for Christians and those of faith who face persecution, we pray also for those whose being church in places of war.

May the knowledge and the love of God be heart of your Church. May the Church, empowered by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit be Christlike in all its expressions.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We ask all these prayers in the name of Jesus, our Lord and servant King. **Amen.**

StF n°471 Lord, I come to you, let my heart be changed, renewed

¹Lord, I come to you,
let my heart be changed, renewed,
flowing from the grace
that I found in you.
And Lord, I've come to know
the weaknesses I see in me
will be stripped away
by the power of your love.

*Hold me close,
let your love surround me;
bring me near, draw me to your side.
And as I wait,
I'll rise up like the eagle,
and I will soar with you,
your Spirit leads me on
in the power of your love.*

²Lord, unveil my eyes,
let me see you face to face,
the knowledge of your love
as you live in me.
Lord, renew my mind,
as your will unfolds in my life
in living every day
by the power of your love.

Geoff Bullock (b. 1956)
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Sending blessing

As you move forward from this time of worship, may you know God our Father speaking love into your soul, know Jesus speaking peace into your heart, and know Holy Spirit speaking joy into your living.

And the blessing of God be with you now and always. Amen.

Let us forward singing...

StF n°648 God to enfold you

God to enfold you,
Christ to uphold you,
Spirit to keep you in heaven's sight:
so may God grace you,
heal and embrace you,
lead you through darkness
into the light.

John L. Bell (b. 1949)
Words and Music: From *Love and Anger* © 1997, WGRG, Iona Community