

**Circuit Service, Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020**  
**Farnworth and Worsley Circuit**



**Welcome:**

As we worship today, may we listen to God, hear the Word of God in our hearts, and feel ourselves transformed by God's Spirit.

**Call to Worship:**

O God, you have called us to power.  
But not a power that shouts, rather, a power that invites –  
because this is your power: a power to call all to be with all people.  
In this power, we find room, we make room,  
and we are made whole. **Amen.**

**Hymn:**

Love divine, all loves excelling,  
Joy of heaven to earth come down;  
Fix in us thy humble dwelling;  
All thy faithful mercies crown!  
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,  
Pure unbounded love Thou art;  
Visit us with Thy salvation;  
Enter every trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit,  
Into every troubled breast!  
Let us all in Thee inherit;  
Let us find that second rest.  
Take away our bent to sinning;  
Alpha and Omega be;  
End of faith, as its Beginning,  
Set our hearts at liberty.

Come, Almighty to deliver,  
Let us all Thy life receive;  
Suddenly return and never,  
Never more Thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above,  
Pray and praise Thee without ceasing,  
Glory in Thy perfect love.

Finish, then, Thy new creation;  
Pure and spotless let us be.  
Let us see Thy great salvation  
Perfectly restored in Thee;  
Changed from glory into glory,  
Till in heaven we take our place,  
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,  
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

**Prayer of Praise:**

Lord of glory we praise you  
Lord of Love we thank you that you choose us, each one in  
turn  
Lord of all we praise you for the call of your kingdom.  
**In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.**

**Prayer of Confession:**

God of justice, justice is your name.

We who call ourselves yours have often left justice at the door-

Preferring words to action.

O God we have done wrong.

Help us to stand up for what we believe is right

Give us the spirit of courage to speak out against injustice and in equality.

Forgive us for the times we have chosen to remain silent.

Support us O God as we turn to seek your face, guide us in ways of righteousness.

And in a moment of silence let us bring our own personal confessions to God

*SILENCE*

Let us rejoice in the knowledge that when we come to God with truly sorrowful hearts, we are indeed forgiven.

**In Jesus name we pray, Amen**

Father, Mother God, we thank you for this new day

Help us to appreciate the splendour that's around us.

We thank you for the season of Autumn bursting with colour.

We thank you for the roof over our heads, the food on the table, the comfy beds on which we sleep.

Most of all we thank you for that wonderful gift of your love for each and everyone of us.

Help us to show such love to others so we can make your world a better place for all.

**In Jesus name we pray. Amen**

**Reading:** Micah 3:5-12

Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets

who lead my people astray,

who cry 'Peace'

when they have something to eat,

but declare war against those

who put nothing into their mouths.

Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision,

and darkness to you, without revelation.

The sun shall go down upon the prophets,

and the day shall be black over them;

the seers shall be disgraced,

and the diviners put to shame;

they shall all cover their lips,

for there is no answer from God.

But as for me, I am filled with power,

with the spirit of the LORD,

and with justice and might,

to declare to Jacob his transgression

and to Israel his sin.

Hear this, you rulers of the house of Jacob

and chiefs of the house of Israel,

who abhor justice

and pervert all equity,

who build Zion with blood

and Jerusalem with wrong!

Its rulers give judgement for a bribe,

its priests teach for a price,

its prophets give oracles for money;

yet they lean upon the LORD and say,

'Surely the LORD is with us!

No harm shall come upon us.'

Therefore because of you

Zion shall be ploughed as a field;

Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,

and the mountain of the house a wooded height.

**Reading:** Matthew 23: 1-12

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: 'The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practise what they preach. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

'Everything they do is done for people to see: they make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honour at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted with respect in the market-places and to be called "Rabbi" by others.

'But you are not to be called "Rabbi", for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth "father", for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

'But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. "Pay back what you owe me!" he demanded.

'His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, "Be patient with me, and I will pay it back."

'But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

'Then the master called the servant in. "You wicked servant," he said, "I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on

you?" In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

'This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'

**Hymn:**

Brother, sister, let me serve you,  
Let me be as Christ to you;  
Pray that I may have the grace  
To let you be my servant, too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,  
We are brothers on the road;  
We are here to help each other  
Walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ light for you  
In the night-time of your fear;  
I will hold my hand out to you,  
Speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping,  
When you laugh I'll laugh with you;  
I will share your joy and sorrow  
Till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven  
We shall find such harmony,  
Born of all we've known together  
Of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you,  
Let me be as Christ to you;  
Pray that I may have the grace  
To let you be my servant, too.

Richard A. M. Gillard (b.1953)

**Reflection: Deacon Debbie Harkness**

### **Practice what you preach**

#### **Introduction:**

#### **Does it really matter that we don't all do things the same way?**

Do you peel your potatoes before you boil them? Well I never use to until my youngest came home from University once and did just that. As first I was a bit yuk! but actually they are very tasty. What about when you eat fish and chips, do you eat the fish first, or the chips, or both together?

And then there is the age old debate, scone with cream and jam!! Put your hand up if you put jam then cream? O.K. those who put cream then Jam put your hands up? That's the question isn't it?? Does it really matter?? is it really important in the scheme of things? Just enjoy it.

You see there are so many ways to do things, and that's what makes us all unique. So then does it really matter how we do things? Or is it just about getting the job done?? Or more importantly doing a good job?

Many years ago I learnt a very, very big lesson in life, one that I often still reflect on today. At the time I was a lay worker at the Welcome in Knutsford. I was in charge of a team of over 30 volunteers, so you can imagine that there were so many variants on how people did the same task. I soon realised that just because someone does something a different way to me doesn't make it wrong. Some people put milk in their cup of tea first, me well I like to put the milk in last because I like strong tea and you cannot take the milk out once it's in can you?. Some people part boil their roast potatoes other put them straight in the roasting tin with the meat. You see its not how we do the job that matters, but rather it is the results that are important!

If you say your going to do something then do it. If your not too sure you can do it then say, I'm not sure I can do that. Matthew 5:34-37 reminds us, let your yes be yes and your no be no. Mean what you say and say what you mean .

My boys use to get cross with me when they were younger ( I'm sure on occasion they still do today, for different reasons though) but when they were younger they would ask if we could go somewhere or if they could do something, sometimes I would say maybe, I'm not promising just yet because I need to think about it. Oh why do you say that would be their reply. My answer I'm not going to promise something that I cannot be 100% sure of doing. And that's really what I want us to explore more today. The importance of Saying what you mean and meaning what you say or to look at it from a different angle Practice what you preach. So let us explore the bible readings a little more and let us be open to what the living word has to say to us today.

We will explore this through the following three points.

- 1) The downfall of the proud
- 2) Gods love for the helpless
- 3) The defeat of the oppressors

#### **So then the downfall of the proud!!**

How many of you remember the following sayings? pride comes before a fall? don't get too big for your boots? Remember where you come from? You know what happens when your pointing a finger at someone! There's three pointing back at you!! Makes you think doesn't it?

You could say that the people in Micah's day were not much different from lots of people today. Many of them lived self-centred lives driven by greed and false pride. They spent their nights plotting against the helpless and their days taking advantage of the weak. In the book of Matthew the Pharisees and the Jewish leaders are also

classic examples of people who lived by double standards. They set the standards of behaviour for others so high that they themselves could not keep these stipulations. In spite of their short comings, the religious leaders still demanded that they be addressed with distinguished titles.

Sound familiar?? Not a lot has changed in the world really in the last 2000 years has it?

Philippians chapter 2 Never do things out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourself. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also the interests of others. Similar words to those from Matthews gospel we heard earlier.

So I guess we should always be asking ourselves why am I doing that? What's my motive?

If we do things to get praised, then we need to be careful, if we do things to get noticed then we need to be careful, if we do things so that others will like us, then we really do need to be careful. If we are following the prompting of Gods spirit in our heart then we off to a good start, but be mindful that we don't get carried away by others praise! We need to keep our eyes on Jesus at all times.

Matthew makes it clear that we should do as the religious leaders say but not as they do!! We also need to take on board that true greatness begins with humility and is proven by our willingness to help others. The Pharisees pride kept them from seeing their true need for God.

Let our actions reflect the love of Jesus to those we meet. Let us learn from the mistakes of the Pharisees and let us people of integrity, after all I think the world needs some of that right now.

**But hang on all is not lost.**

**Point 2 this morning reminds us of God's love for the helpless.**

Deuteronomy 31: 8 reminds us of Gods promise never to leave or forsake us. Do not fear or be dismayed.

I don't know about you, but I have been overwhelmed by the public's response over the M.P.'s decision to sign the document that stopped families receiving extra help with feeding their children during the school holidays.

I mean let us take a minute to think about what it means to be being a single parent, maybe even a teen pregnancy. What is it like to be on a zero hour contract or even working 60 hours a week on the minimum wage just to keep a roof over your babies head or food on the table, or how come those with pay as you go energy meters are having to pay extra for their supply of gas and electric!! How many families do we know who have lost their jobs in the current pandemic? Do you know it is a six week wait for universal Credit and you are not entitled to any other help, how on earth do people manage? And yet it makes my heart jump for joy when you see so many local businesses offering to help even when they too are struggling at this time. And then you get those awful comments from others who say things like you shouldn't have children if you cant afford them. Well if we all waited until we could afford them we wouldn't have any. and you know it makes me sad to say but I have seen even harsher comments on social media this week, unbelievable really.

Now imaging getting your first job at 16, working every hour possible, marrying your childhood sweetheart, both climbing the ranks to well paid jobs, planning every part of life, waiting until your 30 to start a family and then, wham your company tell you that due to a lack of business funding they can no longer justify your position!

Suddenly you too are waiting six weeks for universal credit into the same judgement and unknowing of the teenage pregnancy, the same poverty.

You see tomorrow anyone of us could be the one depending on the help of others!

I am sure that there are many people out there in the big wide world who at this moment in time feel like God has abandoned them? Well let us show them that God hasn't forgotten them.

To quote Teresa of Avila: Jesus Christ has no body now but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world, yours are the feet with which he walks to do good, yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world, yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, and you are his body. Christ has no body on earth now but you. Let us not be people of words, but rather let us be the gospel in action. Let us not just talk the talk but let us walk the walk.

But let us do this out of compassion and not out of fear of God's retribution. Let our motives be the right motives.

Together we can be the voice of the oppressed.

Bringing us to our final point.

### **The defeat of the oppressors**

Micah sees the avaricious and unjust rulers of Israel as building Zion with the bold of the oppressed and the profits of bribery and corruption. On praying for its peace, he cynically points out that the prophets who serve its temple cry 'peace' when they are told to do so!! Religious worship without social justice is meaningless, and Micah warns that Jerusalem and its temple will be destroyed!

You see it's no use us just coming to Church on a Sunday or watching the online service each week if we don't do something about the injustice in the world! It is our responsibility to be the voice of the voiceless, to be the ones to set the prisoner free, we are the ones who are called to take the good news to the poor.

I would just like you to spend a moment and really think about why you come to worship or why you watch the service online? Is it just to look good or does it ease our conscience watching the service online? Why, what's our motive? When was the last time you wrote to your MP or signed a petition against keeping people down trodden.

I wonder then can you help me to serve this community at Christmas through giving gifts to the women's refuge so that they can feel loved and know that they matter?

Can you knock on your neighbour's door and check their O.K.? You see it is important that we understand and hear that worship without social justice makes us just like the Pharisees.

We are the ones who will play a part in defeating the oppressors. For we are called to be the reflection of Jesus in the world.

Let us be people of integrity, people whom others can rely on. Let our yes be yes and our no be no.

Let us practice what we preach.  
Amen.

**Hymn:**

Beauty for brokenness,  
Hope for despair,  
Lord, in Your suffering world  
This is our prayer:  
Bread for the children,  
Justice, joy, peace;  
Sunrise to sunset,  
Your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives,  
Cures for their ills,  
Work for the craftsman,  
Trade for their skills;  
Land for the dispossessed,  
Rights for the weak,  
Voices to plead the cause  
Of those who can't speak.

*God of the poor,  
Friend of the weak,  
Give us compassion we pray:  
Melt our cold hearts,  
Let tears fall like rain;  
Come, change our love  
From a spark to a flame.*

Refuge from cruel wars,  
Havens from fear,  
Cities for sanctuary,  
Freedoms to share;  
Peace to the killing-fields,  
Scorched earth to green,  
Christ for the bitterness,  
His cross for the pain.

Rest for the ravaged earth,  
Oceans and streams  
Plundered and poisoned—  
Our future, our dreams.  
Lord, end our madness,  
Carelessness, greed;  
Make us content with  
The things that we need.

*God of the poor,  
Friend of the weak,  
Give us compassion we pray:  
Melt our cold hearts,  
Let tears fall like rain;  
Come, change our love  
From a spark to a flame.*

Lighten our darkness,  
Breathe on this flame  
Until Your justice  
Burns brightly again;  
Until the nations  
Learn of Your ways,  
Seek Your salvation  
And bring You their praise.

*God of the poor, ....*

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

**Prayers for others and for the world: AUTUMN LEAVES**

Awesome and creator God, we come before you now to pray for your broken world.

Unfortunately, we do not always care for others and your world as we should, so we ask you to guide us and lead us.

Teach us afresh your ways and give us your heart so that we may be transformed into the people you call us to be.

Unite us with your spirit so we too can be disturbed by the pain and suffering of others

Mindful of the current pandemic, we pray for those feeling alone and isolated, we pray for protection in our nursing homes and hospitals, we lift before you those struggling to put food on the tables or to pay their bills.

Nothing is beyond your love, so help us to love those we find difficult to love, help us to understand and love those who live a different life to us.

Lead us to the homeless, the addict and the prisoner so that we may learn compassion and grace, so we may appreciate the depths of your love

Even in the darkest and furthest place in this earth you are there, for there is no hiding place from you.

All people have been created in your image, so we pray for those who don't feel good enough, those who feel inadequate and not worthy of such love. May they know just how wonderful they are, that to be unique and different is Gods way, for you created us all different, all with a different DNA, which makes us unique and special.

Visionaries are needed for your church right now, so raise up leaders of integrity, compassion and creativity so we may move forward in your will and not our own.

Every day we hear new stories of war and famine so we ask that you will protect the refugee and open the hearts and eyes of man so they may see the struggle, the fear of those fleeing such horrors.

So now we bring our prayers to an end and we say together the pray that Jesus taught his disciples.....

### **The Lord's Prayer:**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be Thy name;  
Thy Kingdom come;  
Thy will be done,  
on earth 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.**

### **Offering:**

*(For those who are setting aside their offering each week this prayer may be said:)*

God of all goodness and grace,  
receive the gifts we offer;  
and grant that our whole life,  
may give you glory and praise;  
through Christ our Lord.

**Amen**

### **Hymn:**

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,  
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;  
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,  
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,  
be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;  
be thou my great Father, thy child let me be;  
be thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;  
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;  
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:  
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise:  
be thou mine inheritance now and always;  
be thou and thou only the first in my heart:  
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,  
O grant me its joys after victory is won ;  
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Irish, 8<sup>th</sup> Century  
translated by Mary Elizabeth Byrne (1880–1931)  
versified by Eleanor Henrietta Hull (1860-1935) (alt.)

### **Blessing:**

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you, wherever He may  
send you.

May He guide you through the wilderness,  
protect you through the storm.

May He bring you home rejoicing  
at the wonders He has shown you.

May He bring you home rejoicing  
once again into our doors.

Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord. Thanks be to God.

**Amen.**

### **After Service Telephone Chat:**

If you are not able to join the online Zoom After Service Coffee and Chat, this option offers an opportunity to join Rev. Sarah Knebel and others around the circuit for a chat on the telephone.

### **Dial-in information:**

**Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020 from 11:45 AM**

**Telephone Number: 0333 011 0616**

**Access code: 623 5908**

Please note the call asks you to press the '£' key after entering the access code. You do not need to do this. You can either press the '#' key, or just wait, and you will be connected to the telephone chat.



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