

**Circuit Service, Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020**  
**Farnworth and Worsley Circuit**



**Welcome:**

Good morning everyone, and welcome. We are so grateful for Gill who is preaching today and to all those sharing in our worship. We worship the God who is immortal, invisible and wise. But also closer to us than our own heartbeat.

**Call to Worship:**

Loving, compassionate God, as a mother hen gathers her chicks,  
so you draw the whole human family to yourself.  
Bring us together now, Lord,  
that we may today and forever be united under your wing  
in all our sorrows and joys. Amen.  
God of Grace, God of Peace, God of timeless Love,  
Give us faith, give us hope, give us strength to trust in you.

**Hymn:**

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
most blessèd, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,  
nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might —  
thy justice like mountains high soaring above  
thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all life thou givest, to both great and small;  
in all life thou livest, the true life of all;  
we blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,  
and wither and perish; but naught changeth thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,  
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;  
all praise we would render: O help us to see  
'tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
most blessèd, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Walter Chalmers Smith (1824–1908)

**Prayers of Praise and Confession:**

As a church, we have been given many gifts,  
many talents, many opportunities,  
and so we pray:  
Loving God, help us – individually, and as your people together –  
to be your witnesses in the world today.  
Help us to take risks and not stay in our comfort zones.  
Bless us with the courage of your first disciples,  
that your kingdom may come and your will be done  
in this place and throughout the world.  
We bring to you, gracious God, what is yours:  
our thanks, our praise, our hearts, our lives.  
As we sing, as we celebrate, as we listen and as we pray,  
bless each one of us with a sense of your presence  
and the reassurance of your love.  
You give us so much, Lord,  
trusting us more than we trust ourselves,  
giving us more than we think we deserve,  
blessing us with opportunities that we are slow to take.

Thank you for believing in us;  
help us to believe in ourselves, in one another and in you.

**And so we confess:**

Forgive us, God of all:  
when we bury your gifts in the ground of our fear;  
when we bury our responsibilities in the ground of reluctance;  
when we bury your hopes for us in the ground of our hesitancy.  
Forgive us, and free us to be your fruitful servants,  
people on whom you can depend and rely.  
We ask this 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,  
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.**

**Hymn:**

All my days I will sing this song of gladness,  
give my praise to the fountain of delights;  
for in my helplessness you heard my cry,  
and waves of mercy poured down on my life.

I will trust in the cross of my Redeemer,  
I will sing of the blood that never fails,  
of sins forgiven, of conscience cleansed,  
of death defeated and life without end.

*Beautiful Saviour, wonderful Counsellor,  
clothed in majesty, Lord of history,  
you're the Way, the Truth, the Life.  
Star of the Morning, glorious in holiness,  
you're the risen one, heaven's champion,  
and you reign, you reign over all!*

I long to be where the praise is never-ending,  
yearn to dwell where the glory never fades,  
where countless worshippers will share one song,  
and cries of 'worthy' will honour the Lamb!

*Beautiful Saviour ...*

Stuart Townend (b.1963)

**Reading:** Psalm 90

Lord, you have been our dwelling-place  
in all generations.  
Before the mountains were brought forth,  
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,  
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

You turn us back to dust,  
and say, 'Turn back, you mortals.'  
For a thousand years in your sight  
are like yesterday when it is past,  
or like a watch in the night.

You sweep them away; they are like a dream,  
like grass that is renewed in the morning;  
in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;  
in the evening it fades and withers.

The days of our life are seventy years,  
or perhaps eighty, if we are strong;

So teach us to count our days  
that we may gain a wise heart.

Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,  
so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

**Reading:** Matthew 25; 14-30

### The Parable of the Talents

‘For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.

The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, “Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.” His master said to him, “Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.” And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, “Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.” His master

said to him, “Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.”

Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, “Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.” But his master replied, “You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents.

For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

### Hymn:

Take this moment, sign, and space;  
take my friends around;  
here among us make the place  
where your love is found.

Take the time to call my name,  
take the time to mend  
who I am and what I've been,  
all I've failed to tend.

Take the tiredness of my days,  
take my past regret,  
letting your forgiveness touch  
all I can't forget.

Take the little child in me,  
scared of growing old;  
help me here to find my worth  
made in Christ's own mould.

Take my talents, take my skills,  
take what's yet to be  
let my life be yours, and yet,  
let it still be me.

John L. Bell (b.1949) and Graham Maule (b.1958)

**Reflection: Gill Dascombe**

From Psalm 90: .... 'Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations...from everlasting to everlasting you are God.'

Some thoughts about time, and a new take on an old story.

So - time – what is it?

In one way time can seem like a circle. The days of the week, the months of the year, the seasons, roll round in an ever-repeating pattern.

But, in another way, time can seem like a straight line, moving from past to present and future, and us through the days of our years and our lives together.

And in yet another way, there is time that is part of eternity. Time which neither repeats in a circle nor moves on as a line, but just is. As God is. From everlasting to everlasting.  
This month of November is a very appropriate one for such reflections, because at this point in the church's year, we stand

between past and future. On the first of the month we had All Saints' Day, when we gave thanks for our forebears in the faith. Then we had Remembrance Sunday, when we held before God those have given their lives for our freedom.

And then at the end of November – only a couple of weeks off now, it will be Advent, and we'll be looking ahead to Christmas and all that means.

These two Sundays in November, then, can offer us a brief chance, in worship, to reflect, not on the past, not on the future, but on the now. Not on what do, or even on what we think, but on who we are.....

Such reflection calls for openness and honesty and courage, and may not be easy. It may lead us to re-experience the feelings that move us most deeply. But God is here, and God is love.

In their book on Theological Reflection, Patricia O'Connell and John de Beer write this:

*If we overcome our fear and ambivalence toward looking at ourselves and our experience, and if we undertake that journey, we will find that our lives are a treasure....*

Which brings me to the parable of the talents!

A master was about to go away, so he assembled all of his servants, and gave them each some talents. A talent, in the ancient Greek world, was the word for a large amount of money. A very large amount. In my commentary it says that one talent would be equivalent to thousands of pounds in today's money. So, two or five talents represented untold riches. Treasure, in fact!  
Let's hit the pause button here, and, in our imaginations, watch those servants as they contemplate the unimaginably wondrous treasure they are holding in their hands.

Now put yourself in their place. How do you feel? Surprised, overwhelmed, anxious, excited, fearful....

Hold that thought for a moment!

When this story was first written, the people of the early church thought that Christ was going to return very soon, and they were waiting for him to come and complete his work, to bring in God's kingdom of justice and peace, to right every wrong and hold everyone to account, like the servants with their talents.

But Christ didn't come then, nor has he come, in the way that they were expecting, in the two thousand years that have rolled by since then, each bearing its own weary load of suffering, injustice and warfare.

If we are still waiting as they were waiting, then it may be that we are applying the wrong kind of time, and imagining God's kingdom in a time line, as a figment of a hazy future, beyond us and..... without us.

We need to look at this story in a new way. A way for our time.

So what do we know? We know that God has been our dwelling place through all generations. We know that Jesus promised to be with us always. We know that throughout its turbulent history, the world has never been without love. And we know that where there is love and sacrifice there is healing and newness of life. And in each act of love the work of Christ is completed anew. God's kingdom is, as God is. From everlasting to everlasting, within us, around us and among us.

This is our treasure. This is untold riches with which we have been entrusted. Our lives, with all their joys and sorrows, their relationships, their potential and their memories. They are, literally, all we have. They are our untold wealth. God has entrusted to all who would receive it, the power to be agents of his rule of love.

And the righting of wrong: it's in our hands. The bringing of peace: It's in our hands. The building of a world of peace and healing and harmony. It's in our hands.

And what of the cruel and vindictive master in the story? He can't represent God, because God is love. No, if anything, I think the master represents us, because so often we're our own worst enemies. Too ready to blame ourselves and punish ourselves because we're scared if we think we haven't got it right, or fear that we're not good enough.

Perhaps that is why it may feel so daunting to really reflect, honestly and deeply, on ourselves and our experience. (But God is here. And God is love.)

In the hymn O Lord and Father of Mankind, there are some lovely words which describe Jesus in prayer: ...'To share with Thee the silence of eternity interpreted by love'

So now, before we close, I invite you to join with me in doing just that. Simply to be in God's presence. So, make yourself comfortable, close your eyes, and allow me to guide you with some short questions....

Who am I?      Who is God to me?      Who am I to God?

Who are we?      What is God to us?      Who are we to God?

And What is the work of God in this place?

.... 'Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations...from everlasting to everlasting you are God.'

**Hymn:**

O God, you search me and you know me.  
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.  
When I walk or lie down you are before me:  
ever the maker and keeper of my days.

You know my resting and my rising.  
You discern my purpose from afar,  
and with love everlasting you besiege me:  
in every moment of life or death, you are.

Before a word is on my tongue, Lord,  
you have known its meaning through and through.  
You are with me beyond my understanding:  
God of my present, my past and future, too.

Although your Spirit is upon me,  
still I search for shelter from your light.  
There is nowhere on earth I can escape you:  
even the darkness is radiant in your sight.

For you created me and shaped me,  
gave me life within my mother's womb.  
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you:  
safe in your hands, all creation is made new.

Bernadette Farrell (b.1957)  
based on psalm 139

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

God calls you to bring your life before him.  
Will you offer your hands to help others?

**We will.**

Will you offer your gifts to encourage others?

**We will.**

Will you offer your resources to share with others?

**We will.**

Will you offer your time to listen to others?

**We will.**

Will you offer your hearts in compassion for others?

**We will.**

Will you entrust all that you are, and all that you long to be,  
to the good of others and to the glory of God?

**We will.**

**Amen.**

**Offering:**

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

Loving God,  
All that we have,  
All that we do,  
All that we are,  
We offer to you,  
In Jesus' Name.  
Amen

### Hymn:

Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim,  
and publish abroad his wonderful name;  
the name all-victorious of Jesus extol;  
his kingdom is glorious, and rules over all.

God ruleth on high, almighty to save;  
and still he is nigh, his presence we have;  
the great congregation his triumph shall sing,  
ascribing salvation to Jesus our King.

'Salvation to God who sits on the throne!'  
Let all cry aloud, and honour the Son;  
the praises of Jesus the angels proclaim,  
fall down on their faces, and worship the Lamb.

Then let us adore, and give him his right;  
all glory and power, all wisdom and might,  
all honour and blessing, with angels above,  
and thanks never-ceasing, and infinite love.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

### Blessing:

O God, you have made us your people, we who once were not a  
people.  
You have spread your arms of love wide and welcomed all.  
Your invitation is always open, always ready to extend and expand.  
Send us out, now, in the joy of your inclusion  
and with the mission of your hospitality for all.  
Father, Son and Spirit, you dwell in community and call us to  
community.  
Source, Light and Love, you welcome all.

**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, 15<sup>th</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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