

**Circuit Service, Sunday 21st February 2021
Farnworth and Worsley Circuit**



Welcome and Call to Worship:

Welcome all of you.
We are here because God loves us.
We are here because God knows us.
We are here because God cares for us.
So come, let us worship God.

Come together to be God's people.
Come together and be yourselves.
Bring to God your joys and your struggles.
Bring to God your hopes and your fears.
Come together to be God's people,
and let us worship the living God.

Debbie is going to lead us now in prayer and then we sing the song,
Beneath the cross of Jesus.

Prayer of Praise:

God of the day and night whose light makes life possible, we rejoice
in the colour and beauty of your world, Filling our senses and
showing us your power and glory.

Creating God we worship and Adore you

God of the earth and sky, whose imagination conceived and created
billions of stars and planets, spinning in silent harmony and grace,
We are awed at the vastness and splendour of your universe.

Creating God we worship and adore you

God of the land and sea, whose open -handed extravagance delights
in variety, covering the earth with more plants and trees than
humankind can count, filling the seas with life, from tiny plankton to
mighty whale.

Creating God we worship and adore you

God of times and seasons, whose nature is wholeness and balance,
giving work and rest, day and night, summer and winter. We
celebrate this time of Lent, a time for reflection, a time for us all to
correct the balance in our lives so we may grow into the fullness of
Christ.

Creating God we worship and adore you.

God of fields and forests, whose abundant energy overflows in joy,
the birds of the air singing praises to you, sheep cattle, ladybirds and
bees, flowers and fruit tell of your love.

Creating God we worship and adore you.

God of all peoples and nations whose love longs for expression in
community, you have made each one of us so different, yet still in
your own image.

We give thanks that your bountiful earth provides riches enough for
all to share.

Creating God we worship and adore you.

Amen

Hymn:

Beneath the cross of Jesus,
I find a place to stand;
and wonder at such mercy
that calls me as I am.
For hands that should discard me,
hold wounds which tell me 'Come.'
Beneath the cross of Jesus
my unworthy soul is won.

Beneath the cross of Jesus
his family is my own;
once strangers chasing selfish dreams,
now one through grace alone.
How could I now dishonour
the ones that you have loved?
Beneath the cross of Jesus
see the children called by God.

Beneath the cross of Jesus,
the path before the crown,
we follow in his footsteps
where promised hope is found.
How great the joy before us —
to be his perfect bride.
Beneath the cross of Jesus
we will gladly live our lives.

Keith Getty (b.1974) and Kristyn Getty (b.1980)

Reading: 1 Peter 3: 18-22 (New Revised Standard Version)

For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight people, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you— not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

Reading: Mark 1: 9-15 (New Revised Standard Version)

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

Hymn:

Seek ye first the kingdom of God,
and his righteousness,
and all these things shall be added unto you;
Allelu-, alleluia:
*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia,
allelu-, alleluia!*

Ask, and it shall be given unto you;
seek and ye shall find;
knock, and the door shall be opened unto you;
Allelu-, alleluia:

We shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word
that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord ;
Allelu-, alleluia :

Karen Lafferty (b.1948)

Reflection: Alex Laing

Do you ever get that feeling that God is trying to tell you something? Two friends independently sent me the same message this week. Let me share it with you. It's a cartoon picture of a person saying, 'I can't work out why I'm so tired lately.' This person is carrying a huge rock on their back. On the rock are the words:

'The cold of winter plus a lack of sunlight plus lockdown plus the uncertain future plus the whole of last year generally, plus the unrelenting news cycle plus that email you've been putting off, plus the lack of human contact plus some other stuff you can't quite put your finger on...'

And then, on the same day, I received an email from college, sent to all students, suggesting ten things to do to raise your mood and energy levels. Coincidence or God-incidence?

In our Gospel reading today, we hear Jesus proclaim, 'The time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God has come near, repent and believe the good news.'

I'd like to give a slightly different slant to the concept of repentance in this reflection today. From the Greek *metanoia*, it means a change of mindset. Now we usually interpret that as turning away from the need to sin and trying to stop ourselves from doing the thing which seems to come in the way of our relationship with God. And this is absolutely right. Today, I want to suggest that we also need to repent whatever is stopping us from being the person lovingly made in the image of God.

How would it be if today, we saw repentance as recognising the thing that stops us flourishing as a child of God and turning away from that. For there are some things we do and some thoughts we have, which do not allow us to flourish. They perhaps numb us or give us some escapism, but not in a healthy way. So, as part of the repentance process, how about we recognise these things and then

we choose to do something to help release ourselves from the need to continue these thoughts or behaviours, so that we can say to God, 'Yes, I am made in your image, I'm going to look after my body and mind so that I can be Jesus's disciple,'

Myself, I numb myself with box sets. I love to watch every episode of a really good TV drama. It occupies my mind during the day even when I'm not watching. Today I'm thinking about DS Arnott and DI Fleming. Line of Duty fans will perhaps recognise this obsession! Now a bit of escapism is not a problem, but it's not good if we are using the telly to numb ourselves to what we're really thinking and feeling. We can't be Jesus' disciples if we are numb. We can't be open to the amazing presence of God, if we are not present to God's presence.

Same with alcohol, chocolate, the internet – if we are using something to cope that is not actually looking after us, are we really living as children of God? Same with our internal self-talk: if we tell ourselves that our bodies are fat and ugly, if we tell ourselves that we are stupid, is that really correct, when we are told in Psalm 139 that we are fearfully and wonderfully made?

In 1 Peter, we read about what Jesus has done for us. Chapter 3 says: 'For Christ also suffered for sins once and for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God.' We don't need to add to that suffering, or beat ourselves up mentally, because Jesus has done it for us. We are forgiven, loved and free.

Let's embrace that. Let's recognise just what Jesus has done for us, the enormity of it. We are forgiven, loved and free! Then we can begin to ask ourselves, what is it that is standing in my way? Am I really looking after my body and mind, so that I can be Jesus' disciple?

Self-care is not indulgent navel-gazing. It's a really important part of our discipleship, which is why I believe it is part of our on-going repentance. Are we ready to encounter God *now*, to be part of the Kingdom *now*, to live in the Kingdom *now*?

Go well, everyone, and look after yourselves.

In Jesus' name. **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)

Prayers for others and for the world:

Heavenly Father,
In Psalms we read that David was not afraid to express his true feelings;
Ask for guidance and forgiveness.
And as he prayed, his spirit was lifted from cries of despair
To hope and trust in you.
When life is tough, it is not always easy to readily trust.
Though we may doubt and falter, hold on to us Lord.
Help us to keep following you.
Jesus faced temptation in the wilderness.
He resisted and said no.
In times of temptation and testing, strengthen us.
When we are faced with a bombardment of options, directions and decisions in daily life,
And the way ahead seems uncertain,
Help us to keep our eyes on you Lord, our rock and guide.

Jesus brought Good News, offering love, freedom and justice
A message of hope, particularly to the oppressed, the poor and those without hope.
Sadly we hear of injustice and oppression and see many symptoms of disorder in the news,
Give wisdom, guidance, and compassion to all in authority and responsibility -
Politicians and leaders of nations and communities with difficult decisions to make.
The solutions appear impossible; the tasks so complex, daunting and insurmountable.
So easy to criticise.
Help each one of us to play our part in growing your kingdom of love, peace and justice,
Remembering that you are right there in the midst of seemingly hopeless situations –

Redeeming, restoring, renewing.
Alongside the positive action, you are at work in the world and in our lives,
Present in a multitude of ways –
In numerous expressions of love, kindness and compassion,
In the actions of doctors, nurses, carers, emergency services, utility and delivery services, countless volunteers,
In the hope of the vaccine roll-out across the world
Changing daily lives and hopefully saving countless lives.

Lord, what a privilege to carry everything to you, in prayer!
There are many people, maybe someone listening right now,
Experiencing a difficult time; the future appears an uphill struggle;
Maybe in need of hope; healing; a friend; a home; food; love; peace; rest; comfort.
We quietly bring them to you now
Enfold each one, whatever the need in your love and peace.

Thank you for the covenant you made, the reassuring promise of the rainbow,
Reminding us of your faithfulness, and the Good News that you never give up on us.

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 them that 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:)

Bless the offering we bring, Lord God, and bless us too,
that our money and our whole lives might be for you;
that your will be done and your Kingdom come,
even through us.
In Jesus' name.

Amen

Hymn:

I am a new creation,
no more in condemnation,
here in the grace of God I stand.
My heart is overflowing,
my love just keeps on growing,
here in the grace of God I stand.

*And I will praise you, Lord,
yes, I will praise you, Lord,
and I will sing of all that you have done.
A joy that knows no limit,
a lightness in my spirit —
here in the grace of God I stand.*

Dave Bilborough (b.1965)

Blessing:

Creator God, you made us in your image
to be your people, wherever we go.
This coming week, whatever we experience,
wherever we find ourselves,
help us to know that you are with us –
guiding, revealing and sustaining – always. Amen.

May the Love of God enfold you.
May the Light of God surround you,
May the power of God protect you,
May the presence of God watch over you,
Wherever you are, and for evermore. **Amen.**

**After Service Telephone Chat:
Sunday 21st February 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 can either press the '#' key, or just wait, and you will be connected to the telephone chat.

**After Service Zoom Chat:
Sunday 21st February from 11:45 AM**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2172687931?
pwd=aHVOb1VsUnE1SlI3OSTSaFRDQnVaQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2172687931?pwd=aHVOb1VsUnE1SlI3OSTSaFRDQnVaQT09)

Meeting ID: 217 268 7931
Passcode: RevDazzer

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available
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