

**Circuit Service, Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021  
Farnworth and Worsley Circuit**



**Welcome:**

Hello and very warm welcome to our service today. It's lovely to have you joining us for worship. Today we are going to be thinking about relationships and we will see how even Jesus and his disciples didn't always agree. But that didn't mean that Jesus rejected them. In fact, it was through having the courage to argue with Jesus that the disciples learned how to follow him.

My thanks today to all who have contributed to this service, to Trevor, Naomi, Alex, Darren and Alan, as we come together to worship God.

**Call to Worship:**

Through the psalmist, God says,  
'Be still, and know that I am God!'  
Let us come into God's presence and still our hearts.  
Let us come together to listen to God.  
Let us be still, and know that God is indeed God.

**Gathering Prayer:**

Holy God, we come from our busy lives.  
We often forget that you walk with us.  
As we gather now, help us to be more aware of who you are.  
Give us the courage to admit when we don't understand,  
so that we might grow more like you in all we do.  
Amen.

**Hymn:**

At the name of Jesus  
every knee shall bow,  
every tongue confess him  
King of Glory now.  
'Tis the Father's pleasure  
we should call him Lord,  
who from the beginning  
was the mighty Word.

Humbled for a season,  
to receive a name  
from the lips of sinners  
unto whom he came,  
faithfully he bore it  
spotless to the last,  
brought it back victorious  
when from death he passed:

Bore it up triumphant  
with its human light,  
through all ranks of creatures  
to the central height,  
to the throne of Godhead,  
to the Father's breast  
filled it with the glory  
of that perfect rest.

In your hearts enthrone him;  
there let him subdue  
all that is not holy,  
all that is not true;  
crown him as your captain  
in temptation's hour:  
let his will enfold you  
in its light and power.

For this same Lord Jesus  
shall return again,  
with his Father's glory,  
with his angel train;  
all the wreaths of empire  
meet upon his brow,  
and our hearts confess him  
King of Glory now.

Caroline Maria Noel (1817–1877)

### **Prayer of Praise:**

Gracious and merciful God,  
on this second Sunday in Lent we come together to worship you,  
to praise you and to thank you.  
We come together in the name of Christ  
remembering again those lonely and testing days  
he endured in the wilderness.  
We come together recalling how deliberately he spent time there  
alone,  
reflecting on who he was and what you wanted of him.  
We come reminded of the courage, the faith,  
and the commitment he showed during that time –  
qualities that were to characterize the rest of his ministry.

Gracious God,  
help us to use this time given to us.  
May we draw closer to you through it,  
understanding more of your nature and our own.  
May it deepen our faith,  
strengthen our commitment,  
and confirm our sense of calling.  
May we learn what it means to follow Christ  
and what it means to serve you.  
May we recognize more clearly the true cost of discipleship  
but equally the rewards.

May we understand more fully  
why you have put us here,  
what you would have us do,  
who you would have us be,  
how you would have us live,  
and where you would have us go.

Gracious God,  
prepare us through this time of worship  
to understand and celebrate more fully  
all you have done for us in Christ.  
And so may we love you more truly  
and serve you more faithfully,  
to the Glory of your name.

**Amen.**

### **Prayer of Confession:**

Gracious God,  
we have failed you in so much,  
refusing to take up our cross  
and follow in the footsteps of Jesus.  
We have not obeyed your commandments,  
or loved as you have loved us,  
or in any way lived faithfully as your people.  
We have been narrow in our vision,  
weak in our commitment,  
careless in our worship,  
self-centred in our attitudes,  
repeatedly preferring our way to yours  
and wandering far from you.

Gracious God,  
have mercy upon us.  
Renew us in heart and mind and spirit,

strengthen our will and deepen our faith,  
and send us out once more as your people,  
forgiven and restored,  
to live and work for you, in the name of Christ.

**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.**

**Reading:** Mark 8: 31-38 (New Revised Standard Version)

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it,

and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

**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

**Reflection:** Rev. Sarah Knebel

I can't help but feel sorry for Peter. On so many occasions Peter says something to Jesus or does something, with all the right intentions, but instead Jesus tells him off for saying or doing something wrong, and we have a fine example of this in today's reading.

Here in our reading we find Jesus telling the disciples a truth that is difficult for them to hear; teaching them that he will undergo suffering, rejection and be killed, but yet three days later would rise again. The disciples, however, appear to focus on the first three facts; on the suffering, rejection and being killed. Often impulsive, often someone to speak before they thought, Peter interjects, pulls Jesus to one side and engages in a conversation that obviously riles Jesus and causes him to retort, 'Get behind me, Satan!' Strong words that suggest strong and perhaps heightened emotions are at play in this scene. There is evidence of a strain on the relationship between Jesus and Peter.

We don't know what Peter said to Jesus, perhaps they were words motivated by love and admiration for Jesus, "Nah, mate. That can't possibly happen to you. You're the Messiah!" or perhaps they were words of frustration, "Hang on a minute, I've given up everything for you and now you're telling me you're going to die!" Either way, Peter's objection to Jesus' words make sense and could be seen to be a natural reaction. Jesus dying wasn't what Peter or the rest of the disciples had in mind. Peter and his brother Andrew, for example, had made considerable sacrifices to follow Jesus. They had left their work, their families, the security of their homes in response to Jesus' invitation to, "Follow me!" They had given up everything because they believed that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah, and everything that they had seen up until this point suggested that their sacrifice was worthwhile. But now Jesus is talking about suffering and dying, and, based on their understanding, suffering was not part of the vocation of a Messiah and a Messiah did not get killed by the

authorities. No wonder this talk of suffering and death shook Peter and his fellow disciples to the core.

Whether Peter was angry or whether he spoke out of concern, his words of rebuke caused Jesus to respond with words of rebuke also. Whilst Peter's words were spoken to one side, away from the others, Jesus' words on the other hand are intentionally spoken in a way that others would hear them. Why did Jesus rebuke Peter so sternly and so publicly? Some suggest it might be because Peter was often the spokesperson for all of the disciples, so in singling Peter out Jesus may have been indirectly addressing all of the other disciples. Others think that it may be because Peter was putting into words the very temptations that Jesus himself was struggling with internally. Where, previously, in the wilderness Jesus had been tempted by Satan, now the tempter speaks here in the voice of a well-meaning friend and Jesus has to do all he can to push the temptation away. It could have been easy at this point for Peter to walk away from Jesus, hurt and humiliated, their relationship fractured, but the openness that Jesus and Peter had between each other meant their relationship survived this mutual rebuking. Despite often stumbling and making mistakes, Peter didn't give up following Jesus and Jesus didn't reject Peter. Only six days after this event Peter is included in Jesus' transfiguration and later he becomes the leader of the Church in Jerusalem! Though Peter makes mistakes, he learns from them, he moves on and his relationship holds.

We all respond differently to our mistakes and the mistakes of others. At one extreme, we may be so 'laid back', that we don't even realise that we have affected or been affected by others. At the other extreme, we may be so paralysed by what we see to be our failures or the failures of others that we give up trying to reconcile hurts. Where are we on that spectrum?

At times it may seem easier to turn and walk away from mistakes we have made or the hurt we have caused or had done to us than to

address it openly and mutually. In the Lion King, for example, we see how a rebuke in response to a seeming mistake, together with some bad advice, leads to an alternative ending. Simba, thinking he has killed his father, runs away as opposed to facing up to what has happened. It takes many years for this wound to heal, and yet with some good advice and encouragement from a wise counsellor it does heal. Simba returns to his family to face his past, to face the hurt and to learn from it. For those who know the story of the Lion King, you will know that this indeed leads to Simba learning that he was not the cause of his Father's death and to him becoming reconciled and reunited with his family.

And then there are times, when reconciliation seems beyond hope. When rifts run too deep and relationships feel broken beyond repair. When it feels that no amount of time will bring healing. Not to acknowledge this or to suggest that as human beings we have the ability to heal all relationships would be wrong. But we can ask Jesus to be present in those relationships, to be present with us and with the other, to bring healing and peace. As Jesus did not walk away from Peter, so Jesus does not walk away from each one of us. Where relationships feel broken beyond repair, then it harms us to hold grudges, to remain unreconciled, but sometimes the only reconciliation we can seek is in giving the situation to God and asking God to hold it so that we can let go and learn and heal.

This Lent, Pope Francis speaks of fasting in different ways, some of his suggestions speak into our relationships, especially into relationships where there has been or is hurt. He suggests that we fast from hurting words and say kind words, that we fast from anger and be filled with patience, that we fast from worries and have trust in God, that we fast from grudges and be reconciled.

How might we respond this Lent to mistakes that we have made or the mistakes of others, to the hurt that we have caused or that has

been done to us, so that we might be reconciled in whatever form that might take and learn from all that has passed?

Let us pray:

Caring and constant God,  
you know how our hearts ache -  
you have been there too.  
Breathe your Spirit of healing into us,  
deepen our awareness of our own need,  
that your healing grace may flow through us into others.  
Help us to take courage from your love that knows no limits,  
your compassion which never fails,  
your forgiveness without end:  
Caring and constant God.  
Amen.

Our prayer extends into our next hymn, a hymn that seeks reconciliation, healing and wholeness:

**Hymn:**

God! When human bonds are broken  
and we lack the love or skill  
to restore the hope of healing,  
give us grace and make us still.

Through that stillness, with your Spirit  
come into our world of stress,  
for the sake of Christ forgiving  
all the failures we confess.

You in us are bruised and broken:  
hear us as we seek release  
from the pain of earlier living;  
set us free and grant us peace.

Send us, God of new beginnings,  
humbly hopeful into life.  
Use us as a means of blessing:  
make us stronger, give us faith.

Give us faith to be more faithful,  
give us hope to be more true,  
give us love to go on learning:  
God! Encourage and renew  
Fred Kaan (1929–2009))

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

God of love,  
We read in our lectionary today about Jesus' predicted suffering.  
We pray for all experiencing suffering,  
All who are currently ill with the virus,  
And all learning to live with long Covid,  
All who have an illness, whatever its name.  
We pray that they may feel your strength.

We read in our lectionary about Jesus' predicted death.  
We pray for all who have lost someone to Covid-19,  
And for all who have been bereaved, whatever the circumstances.  
We pray that they may feel your peace.

We read in our lectionary about denying ourselves to serve others.  
We pray for all who work in hospitals and prisons,  
And the emergency services.  
For carers and volunteers,  
For all involved in the ongoing vaccination programme.  
We pray that they may feel your patience and energy.

We read in our lectionary about taking up our cross.  
We pray for all in difficult circumstances,

All who have lost their jobs or their homes,  
All who have issues with mental health,  
All who are at home but feel unsafe.  
We pray that they may feel your security.

We read in our lectionary that we must deny ourselves and follow  
Jesus.  
We pray that we may recognise our wrongdoing and adopt new  
habits instead,  
That we may love without conditions,  
That we may doubt our doubts  
And follow you whole heartedly.

God of love,  
We ask all this in in the name of Jesus.  
**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:**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you have come to us,  
you are one with us,  
Mary's Son;  
cleansing our souls from all their sin,  
pouring your love and goodness in;  
Jesus, our love for you we sing,  
living Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you have come to us,  
born as one of us,  
Mary's Son;  
led out to die on Calvary,  
risen from death to set us free;  
living Lord Jesus, help us see  
you are Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
we would come to you,  
live our lives for you,  
Son of God.  
All your commands we know are true;  
your many gifts will make us new;  
into our lives your power breaks through,  
living Lord.

Patrick Appleford (b.1925)

**Blessing:**

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.

**Amen.**

**After Service Telephone Chat:  
Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> 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 28<sup>th</sup> February from 11:45 AM**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2172687931?  
pwd=aHVOb1VsUnE1Sll3OSTSaFRDQnVaQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2172687931?pwd=aHVOb1VsUnE1Sll3OSTSaFRDQnVaQT09)

Meeting ID: 217 268 7931  
Passcode: RevDazzer

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