

Circuit Service, Sunday 18th April 2021
Farnworth and Worsley Circuit



Welcome and Call to Worship:

A very warm welcome to you as we meet together to worship God. We may be scattered, we may be meeting in church watching this service online, we may be holding in-church services and catching up on this online service later, but we are united in our care for one another and our worship of God. So come, and join in this act of worship.

Jesus is alive.
We are witnesses of these things!
Let us worship God!

A prayer:
Lord God, whose arms are always open to us,
we come before you today
with hearts and minds open to receive your teaching.
Lead us to understand who you are and what you have done,
and what you require of us as witnesses.
In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Hymn:

He is Lord, he is Lord;
he is risen from the dead, and he is Lord;
every knee shall bow, every tongue confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord.

He is King, he is King;
he will draw all nations to him, he is King;
and the time shall be when the world shall sing
that Jesus Christ is King.

He is love, he is love;
he has shown us by his life that he is love;
all his people sing with one voice of joy
that Jesus Christ is love.

He is life, he is life;
he has died to set us free and he is life;
and he calls us all to live evermore,
for Jesus Christ is life.

Anonymous

Prayers of Praise and Confession:

Lord Jesus Christ,
we thank you for the message of Easter-
for the assurance it brings of your triumph over death,
the proof it offers that love will always have the last word.
Yet alongside that message there is another
that perhaps we do not hear so often-
a challenge which we can ignore,
a call to action as well as to celebration.

You have given us good news;
teach us to share it.

Lord Jesus Christ,
you appeared to your followers, demonstrating you had risen,
and then you sent them out
to proclaim your resurrection to all.
You met with them,
and then called them to lead others to you.

You gave them joy,
and then told them to share it.
Easter was not for the few but for all,
not just for them but the whole world!

You have given us good news;
teach us to share it.

Lord Jesus Christ, forgive us that so often we forget that.
Having experienced your risen presence,
we keep it to ourselves.
Having met with you,
we fail to introduce others to you in turn.
Having received so much,
we have shared so little.
So now we confess our many faults and weaknesses,
and admit that we are often ashamed of our lack of faith,
but we rejoice in the assurance of your mercy and forgiveness,
confident that your love will renew us afresh.

You have given us good news;
teach us to share it.

Lord Jesus Christ,
we thank you for those who have fulfilled your call
and for those who still sow and nurture the seeds of faith.
May many meet with you through their witness
and come to know you as their living Lord and Saviour.

Lord Jesus Christ,
you call each one of us to be your witnesses-
to tell others what we have experienced of your love,
to make known what you have done to us.
Help us to do that faithfully,
to play our part in your kingdom and purpose.

And so, through us may others come to meet you
and know you for themselves.

You have given us good news;
teach us to share it,
to your glory.
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

Reading: Acts 3: 12-19 (New Revised Standard Version)

When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, 'You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And by faith in his

name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out.

Reading: Luke 24: 36b-48 (New Revised Standard Version)

Jesus himself stood among the disciples and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, 'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses[d] of these things.

Hymn:

Come, wounded Healer, your sufferings reveal —
the scars you accepted, our anguish to heal.
Your wounds bring such comfort in body and soul
to all who bear torment and yearn to be whole.

Come, hated Lover, and gather us near,
your welcome, your teaching, your challenge to hear:
where scorn and abuse cause rejection and pain,
your loving acceptance makes hope live again!

Come, broken Victor, condemned to a cross —
how great are the treasures we gain from your loss!
Your willing agreement to share in our strife
transforms our despair into fullness of life.

Martin Leckebusch (b.1962)

Reflection: Rev. Sarah Knebel

I'd like to start by asking you a question ... How has your week been? If you were to write a letter, an email or a text message to someone about your week, what would be the main event or the striking image you would tell them about? Would there be emotions of joy, or anxiety or worry to explore as you share with them about your week? And what about God? Is there a sense of God's presence in what you share with them about your week?

In this week's Gospel story, we meet Jesus' disciples in emotional turmoil. There is a mixture of confusion, uncertainty, scepticism, doubt, joy, disbelief, shock, grief, exhaustion and perhaps a few faint glimmers of understanding. Little wonder then that when Jesus suddenly stands among them, they are terrified and they think they are seeing a ghost. Jesus immediately appeals to their senses, "Look, see, touch!" he says. "Look at my hands and feet, see that it is I. Touch me and see." And as they begin to see, and feel, and hear, Jesus calls on their hospitality; asking for and eating a piece of fish in their presence. Each of these appeals to their senses confirms for the disciples that what they are seeing and experiencing is very real. Jesus is with them. Jesus is alive. He is not just a figment of their imagination. He is the same person they knew before, recently dead and now raised to life.

The words “Look, see, touch,” and the physicality of eating in front of the disciples is powerful. The impact on the disciples is real and the imagery remains an essential detail in our witness to the risen Lord today. This very physical way in which Jesus shares who he is with the disciples matters. The story is personal; the scars are real, as he bears witness to what God has done and is doing through him. It is, in fact, so important that Jesus first settles in the disciples minds who he is, that it is only once they have got this, that Jesus then enables them to grasp what this means as he opens their minds to understand the scriptures and to realise that the scriptures have been fulfilled, in that moment, in their sight and sound and touch. In sharing his story, Jesus opens both the disciple's hearts to the possibility that he is alive and their minds to understand how – here head and heart become inseparable – the two provide the key to understanding and belief.

Is it surprising, therefore, that when we read in Acts about the way the disciples first testify about the risen Lord, their story follows a similar pattern? They first appeal to the senses of those around them, “Look, see, in the name of Jesus Christ, a lame man walks”. This extension of the physical, healing ministry of Jesus, catches the attention of the crowds. The people are both utterly astonished and filled with wonder and amazement. Their senses transfixed, the disciples then address the crowds – eager to deflect the attention away from themselves and to witness to the power of God at work in and through the name of Jesus Christ, the Author of life, who has been raised from the dead by God. Like Jesus they appeal first to the senses and then open minds to understand. Head and heart are once again inseparable, both again on that day providing the key to understanding and belief. We read in Acts, chapter 4 verse 4, that “on that day many who heard the word believed, and they numbered about five thousand”.

The power of these stories, these testimonies, is that they are very real, lived experiences for both the people who are telling them and

those who are receiving them. So what of our stories? Are not our lives, like those of the disciples, also touched by pain, suffering, anxiety, hardship, joy and distress? Do we not also bear the scars and marks of lives lived? And do we allow these scars to act as life-limiting burdens or as life-giving signs of grace? Perhaps, just perhaps the resurrection offers us a new way of regarding these scars and joys of life, because just as Jesus' suffering carved out his character, so too our experiences shape our character and our stories and can become a powerful witness to the presence of God at work in and through our lives.

Take, for example the powerful story of Sara Miles, journalist and author of *Take this Bread: The spiritual memoir of a twenty-first century Christian*. Sara grew up as a dedicated atheist, but, for no known earthly reason, early one morning in 1999, she wandered into St Gregory of Nyssa church and joined a communion service. The physicality of receiving the bread and wine that day transformed her life. She became a Christian and embraced a faith that previously she had scorned.

But with that came an important discovery: that the Christian faith, at least for her, wasn't all about pious behaviour. It was about people – real hungry people. People who longed to be fed, who needed to be fed. Before long she had turned the bread that she ate at communion into tons, literally tons, of groceries, piled up and ready to be given away. In her book, *Take This Bread*, she writes: ‘the mysterious sacrament turned out to be not a symbolic wafer but actual food – indeed, the bread of life’. The emotional impact of that first encounter with Jesus – in a communion service – not only made Sara Miles want to share the life of Jesus with others through actual food, but she also self-confesses that now she embarrasses people by talking too much about Jesus, telling others about her own experience of God and witnessing to the presence of God at work not only through that life-changing communion service but also through each food parcel that is given away.

So what of our stories, of our experiences of God at work in both the bad times and the good? Whether or not the stories have happy endings, just by sharing the story of how God work's in our lives, we bear witness to God's presence in our world today and to what God has done and is doing for us personally. Mingled with all sorts of emotions – joy, sorrow, sacrifice, struggle, contentment, relief, anger – our stories of real, relatable, everyday life are as powerful and meaningful, and, if shared, have the power to open hearts and minds and be life-changing, life-giving even. Jesus calls us to be witnesses to the risen Lord. So why wait? What was the main event of your week last week? Where did you sense God's presence in it? And who will you share your story with?

Let us pray:

Living Lord,
help us to find a way to show others
what it means to be your follower
in and through the ups and downs of life.
In Christ you are present with us,
and your Spirit will help us find a way.
Amen.

Hymn:

Blessèd be your name
in the land that is plentiful,
where your streams of abundance flow,
blessèd be your name.
And blessèd be your name
when I'm found in the desert place,
though I walk through the wilderness,
blessèd be your name.

Every blessing you pour out
I'll turn back to praise.
And when the darkness closes in, Lord,
still I will say:

*Blessèd be the name of the Lord,
blessèd be your name.
Blessèd be the name of the Lord,
blessèd be your glorious name.*

Blessèd be your name
when the sun's shining down on me,
when the world's 'all as it should be,'
blessèd be your name.
And blessèd be your name
on the road marked with suffering,
though there's pain in the offering,
blessèd be your name.

Every blessing you pour out
I'll turn back to praise.
And when the darkness closes in, Lord,
still I will say:

Blessèd be the name of the Lord ...

You give and take away,
you give and take away.
My heart will choose to say,
'Lord, blessèd be your name.'

Blessèd be the name of the Lord ...

Matt Redman (b.1974) and Beth Redman

Prayers for others and for the world:

Good Morning Everyone and welcome to our prayers of Intercession.

Let us start this morning by remembering Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh, who sadly passed away at the age of 99. We give thanks for his life and the service he gave to our Country, and the inspiration he gave to many through his Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Our thoughts and prayers are with the queen and royal family at this time.

Heavenly Father we pray for those whose hearts have been saddened by the death of someone close and dear to them, for members of our families who have died, and whose anniversary we recall.

As we slowly come out of lockdown we pray for those in public services, who do their job in difficult circumstances. We thank you for our navy, army, police, paramedics, social workers and other professionals who are working through this crisis, please bless them and keep them safe Lord. Please help them reach those who need them in time.

Please bless charities and provide for them, so they can contribute their work for the good of our nation. Thank you for the NHS staff, for their dedication, compassion, and vocation. Bless them at this time of crisis, keep them safe Lord and give them strength.

Please show mercy to the countries too poor to fight off the coronavirus threat, who have no adequate system or healthcare or social welfare. We lift all those in poverty to you, we pray for those who are in or who may face financial difficulties, we pray for those struggling with loneliness, or relationship breakdown.

We pray for those who suffer physically or mentally with depression or anxiety, and for those approaching the end of life.

We pray for our Government and leaders and the difficulties they face as we come out of lockdown.

Lord bring us great love, hope and joy through us your church, help us to minister to others in the strength of your spirit, and to work in unity together. May we share your glorious light in to the darkness and remain steadfast and true to you. Remind us of the joy of living in your world, thank you Lord. **Amen.**

Offering:

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

Loving God,
Our Creator, who gives us life and meaning,
Our Saviour, who gives us wholeness and hope,
Our Comforter, who gives us peace and joy,
We make our gifts to you:
The things we have, the time we spend, the people we are.
May they be used to show your love to all the world,
and to witness to your presence in the world.
Amen.

Hymn:

To God be the glory, great things he has done!
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
who yielded his life in atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in:

*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son;
and give him the glory — great things he has done!*

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to every believer the promise of God!
And every offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives:

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! ...

Great things he has taught us, great things he has done,
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
but purer, and higher, and greater will be
our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see:

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! ...

Frances Jane van Alstyne, (Fanny Crosby) (1820–1915)

Blessing:

Refreshed by this time of worship, Lord,
we go to witness in your world.
Help us to live the truths that we have learned,
so all may see your presence in our lives.

Amen.

After Service Telephone Chat: Sunday 18th April 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 can either press the '#' key, or just wait, and you will be connected to the telephone chat.

After Service Zoom Chat: Sunday 18th April 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

Online circuit services are available to view:

on YouTube, search 'Darren Garfield'

on websites/Facebook pages of all churches in the circuit where available

or at www.walkdenmethodist.org.uk/worship/



FREE phone lines for prayers and news from the Methodist Church:

Listen to a **prayer**: 0808 281 2514

Listen to **news**: 0808 281 2478

Content is updated weekly on Thursday afternoon

CCLI: 648837