

Worship at Home service Sunday 27th August 2023 with Revd Ian Forsyth

A call to worship:

Come, let us find the Rock of the Church,
God's true Messiah, and offer worship. Then
God will be our strength, and Jesus our
confidence, as we engage with the world and
all its needs. **Amen**

StF 489 All I once held dear.

All I once held dear, built my life upon
All this world reveres, and wars to own
All I once thought gain, I have counted loss;
Spent and worthless now, compared to this.
*Knowing you, Jesus, knowing you,
There is no greater thing
You're my all, you're the best
You're my joy, my righteousness
And I love you, Lord.*

Now my heart's desire, is to know you more
To be found in you and known as yours.
To possess by faith, what I could not earn
All-surpassing gift of righteousness.
Refrain

Oh, to know the power of your risen life,
And to know you in your sufferings.
To become like you, in your death, my Lord
So with you to live and never die.
Refrain x 2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=09CzdMszUos>

Bible readings

Isaiah 51.1-6; Psalm 138;
Romans 12.1-8; Matthew 16.13-20

Prayer of confession

Lord, we confess that sometimes we lose
sight of who you are. We forget about you, or
we take you for granted, failing to recognise or
acknowledge that you are the Messiah. We
also forget who we are in you; where we fit
into your Church, who you mean us to be. We
are distracted by the world and its problems
and temptations.

We turn back to you, Lord, seeking to renew
our relationship with you. We want to realise
our full potential in you, to grow and move
forward, making right choices and decisions,
living in you, and you in us. **Amen.**

Prayers of thanksgiving

Father, we thank you that we can always trust
in you, for you make provision for our faults
and failings, and send us all the help and
encouragement we need.

Thank you for Jesus and his earthly life
among his disciples, from that we learn so
much.

Thank you that we can always have
confidence in Jesus, leaning on his teaching
and promises.

We praise you for who he is, and for who we
are and will become in your plans for us. Lead
us onward, heavenly Father. **Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

Response:

We trust you, Lord, to answer our prayers.

**Yours is the kingdom, the power and the
glory. Your will be done, O Lord.**

We pray for people who struggle with their
faith: through self-doubt, through difficult
circumstances, through bad things happening,
through being led astray, by wanting fame and
fortune.

We pray for people who feel in the dark,
locked in a situation where they can find no
answer, that they might come to understand
that you are the key to everything they need.

We pray for ourselves: when we are in difficult
situations, when we try to unlock doors that
aren't ours to unlock, when we don't focus on
the kingdom, when we don't share our story.

The Lord's Prayer

Time to reflect:

This account of Jesus is when Jesus talks to
his disciples as he is heading towards
Jerusalem to be crucified. Some years ago, I
can recall standing in Caesarea Philippi
seeing the fresh water coming out of the side
of the hills meandering its way eventually
joining up with the river Jordan on the way to
the Dead Sea, the lowest place on earth. In
this life we can encounter mountain top
experiences, and at other times we sink to the
lowest of the low in valleys and it is so painful
for us to share with others.

This passage is known as Peter's confession of Christ where Peter said, 'You are the Christ'.

This coming to our senses and experiencing God's revelation is unique to everyone. I have heard people say when someone is going through a life changing event 'I know what you are going through' however my response is that we will never really know what someone is really going through, because we are all so different. Finally, the joy with which Peter came up with his saying 'You are the Messiah the promised one', is unique and yet is shared around the world in all nations, as we worship 'Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour who died at Calvary', giving us a glimpse of being free to worship the living God.

Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you, his heir. It is helpful to look at the background to what we are reflecting on from the Bible reading today.

Jesus is in Gentile country and this a time spent with disciples in a relaxed way, giving his disciples time for reflection, no crowds. A theologian says, 'he wanted to leave some representatives who could carry on his work'. Jesus arrives at Caesarea Philippi and in this place, Jesus asks his disciples a question 'Who do you say I am?', Jesus is about twenty-five miles north of Galilee, at the foot of Mount Hermon. At this place there is a cave that had a shrine dedicated to a pagan god called Pan. If you visit today, there are still small cuttings where there were once shrines, it is possible Jesus is looking south with his back to the pagan god. The disciples are looking at these ancient shrines and this is a turning point not just for Peter, but also it is when Jesus is about to journey towards Jerusalem, and the shadow of the cross is casting its shadow over his ministry.

This the first recorded account of the Messiah of the Jews, Matthew records Peter's words saying, 'You are the Christ'. His reply means 'You are the Messiah which are recorded in all three synoptic Gospels. With all the disciples standing around, Peter (Simon Peter, Son of Jonah, his full name) steps in and takes the lead.

Today's reading in the Bible ends with Jesus saying, do not tell anyone He was the Christ.

He could be saying he wants people to make the discovery themselves. It is my prayer that we sometimes need to take time and ask God to show us, if we have any shrines in our lives that hinder our Methodist way of life. Learning and caring says,

We will care for ourselves and those around us.

We will learn more about our Faith.

We will practise hospitality.

Here is a challenge for us in Northampton Methodist Church, in five years' time will we look back and see if we have been learning and caring for one another. Like Peter will we be able to speak up as he did, as his life was turned around for the Kingdom of God.

In the book of Micah it asks, 'What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

StF 566 – Take my life and let it be.

Take my life and let it be, consecrated, Lord, to thee; Take my moments and my days; let them flow in endless praise,

2 Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of thy love; Take my feet and let them be, swift and beautiful for thee,

3 Take my voice and let me sing always, only, for my King; Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from thee,

4 Take my silver and my gold; not a mite would I withhold; Take my intellect and use every power as thou shalt choose,

5 Take my will and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine. Take my heart - it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne,

6 Take my love; my Lord, I pour at thy feet its treasure store. Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for thee,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gf11rReeWIs>

A sending out prayer:

We go out into your world full of the confidence that you give us. May we, like Peter, begin to grasp what is special about your kind of strength and your kind of courage, as we grapple with our turbulent world. **Amen.**