

Worship at Home service Sunday 24th September 2023 with Revd Ian Forsyth

A gathering prayer:

God of amazing boundless grace, we come together to praise you. God of inexhaustible compassion, we come together to pray to you.

God of perfect justice, we come together to be guided by you. **Amen.**

StF 272 From heaven you came, helpless babe.

From Heaven, you came helpless babe

Entered our world, your glory veiled

Not to be served but to serve

And give your life that we might live

This is our God, The Servant King

He calls us now to follow Him

To bring our lives as a daily offering

Of worship to The Servant King

There in the garden of tears

My heavy load he chose to bear

His heart with sorrow was torn

"Yet not My will but Yours", He said.

This is our God, The Servant King

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To bring our lives as a daily offering

Of worship to The Servant King

Come see His Hands and His feet

The scars that speak of sacrifice

Hands that flung stars into space

To cruel nails surrendered.

This is our God, The Servant King

He calls us now to follow Him

To bring our lives as a daily offering

Of worship to The Servant King

So, let us learn how to serve

And in our lives enthrone Him

Each other's needs to prefer

For it is Christ we're serving.

*This is our God, The Servant King
He calls us now to follow Him
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to The Servant King*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-lxT-2_jRg

Bible readings

Jonah 3.10-4.11; Psalm 145.1-8;
Philippians 1.21-30; Matthew 20.1-16

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

All seeing God,
as the landowner gave work to all those who needed it,
so you give grace **and we thank you,**
so you give strength **and we thank you,**
so you give hope **and we thank you,**
so you give purpose **and we thank you,**
so you give life **and we thank you.**
We thank you for all your love and care for every single one of us.
In Jesus' name, we thank you.
Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Eternal, ever-living, ever-present God,
in the struggles and joys of this day, we pray:
for those who are overburdened, weighed down, demoralised, fearful or
desolate because of what life has thrown at them.

For those engulfed in pain and anguish, facing illness and death.

For those troubled in mind and spirit, who find no peace or calm.

For those alone and lonely, without friend or comfort.

For those frightened and bewildered, who see no direction or purpose in
their lives.

Eternal, ever-living God, bless them all in this and every hour, in this and
every step of life's journey. **Amen.**

Time to reflect:

In Matthew 20 we read about the parable of the owner of the vineyard who hires workers and pays each of them for their work.

A problem came when each worker who was hired at different times of the day, were paid the same amount, a Denarius. The workers who started early expected to be paid more than those who had started later in the day

and an argument broke out and some grumbled. The owner of the vineyard says to one worker 'Didn't you agree to work for a Denarius and 'Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?'

The Methodist way of life identifies hospitality and generosity as practices that express learning and caring.

Generosity is a basic Christian practice and recently I have been reflecting about the increases in the mortgage rates and am aware of many who are finding it hard to budget or facing a challenge to make choices about what food they can buy, due to price increases. Many of us in the church of a certain age will remember the mortgage rates being 15% in the 1980's and finances were tight. Around this time, I recall arriving home one day and someone had very kindly done some grocery shopping and left it on the back door handle just when we needed it to feed our young children.

Over the years we have been blessed with so much and it is important that we can bless others when we are able. The work of a 'Foodbank' has been instrumental in helping families survive in the cost-of-living crisis and many Churches run 'Foodbanks' or support their local foodbank. At my previous Church we had a foodbank and a clothing bank for adults and children, and working with the local council we were able to connect with a national clothing retailer. The outcome of this was that we were able to help clothe people in need across the town of Lowestoft, as we were given a large lorry container full of new clothing.

There are many ways we can help in our communities; some of the town centre churches have joined together to help litter pick in the local community. The generosity of Northampton Methodist Church has been shown over the years by giving to various charities including, All we can, Action for Children, Methodist Homes and many other charities too.

As we look together towards the future of the Northampton Methodist Church how can we be hospitable and generous and share ways in which we can show the community we care?

This parable of the vineyard manager who was generous towards all his workers may surprise us. Today's reflection reminds me of the words of a theologian called Tom Wright who says, 'In reality, God is out in the marketplace, looking for the people everybody else tried to ignore, welcoming them on the same terms, surprising them (and everybody else) with generous Grace'.

StF 55 – Immortal, invisible, God only wise

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.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PS3QinSmPHI>

A sending out prayer:

God, send us out as workers in your vineyard,
to do whatever you call us to do, to do it fairly and without favour, so that
all may share in your harvest of generosity. **Amen.**