

Sunday 14th June 2020

Welcome & Announcements

Call to worship Psalm 100

Praise - 'Mighty to save'

Prayer

Video 'Change the world'

Children's address- message in a bottle

Hymn God forgave my sin in Jesus name (Sun 23/2/20)

NT Reading Matthew 9:35-10:8

Sermon

Prayers for Others

Hymn Go forth & tell (Sun 17/2/19)

Blessing

Welcome & Announcements Good morning everyone and welcome to our service for Regent Street Methodist in Newtownards. Wherever & at whatever time you are watching this, I want to thank you for joining with us as we worship God together. This morning our lectionary passages lead us to consider God's kingdom & mission in the world, but before we hear our call to worship let me remind you of a few notices.

Firstly, can I remind you about our Church meeting at 12 noon on Zoom today. We have called it a picnic but you just want to come on and say hello for a while then that's fine. The link for this meeting was attached to the email about this service.

Secondly, can I thank those of you who have already let me know that you intend to take part in our Church Zoom quiz this coming Saturday the 20th June at 7.30pm. & can I encourage some more of you to take the plunge & send me an email to let me know that you hope to join with us. It should be another chance to catch up & have a bit of fun together.

Finally can I wish George Bennett a belated happy 70th birthday & Elsie Rea a belated 80th birthday & we as a church also want to wish Laura Ewing a happy birthday for next Wednesday. Laura we not only want to say a big Happy birthday, but a big thanks as well for your constant care of our young people & indeed those who are not so young. We pray that you have a wonderful birthday.

Now can we take a moment to still our heartsas we prepare to worship God.

Call to worship -Do join with me as we use the words of Psalm 100 as we remember that the Lord is good....we say the words in bold together.

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

²Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

³Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, & we are his;

we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving & his courts with praise;

give thanks to him and praise his name.

For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;

his faithfulness continues through all generations.

We continue in worship now as we join with the praise group as we sing, Mighty to save.

Praise song- 'Mighty to save'

Everyone needs compassion; A love that's never failing

Let mercy fall on me

Everyone needs forgiveness ; A kindness of a Saviour

The hope of nations

My Saviour, He can move the mountains

My God is Mighty to save , He is Mighty to save

Forever Author of salvation

He rose and conquered the grave

Jesus conquered the grave

So take me as You find me

All my fears and failures

Fill my life again

I give my life to follow

Everything I believe in

Now I surrender Shine your light and let the whole world see

We're singing for the glory of the risen King...Jesus

© CAPITOL CHRISTIAN MUSIC GROUP

Prayer - Lord God we praise You that in your compassion for us You sent Your only Son into our world... And that He came not to condemn but to save. So we worship You now as the king of majesty, Holy & righteous in all Your nature & ways... But also the Lord of mercy... Good & gracious to all.... God You are forever the author of salvation and You are mighty to save....

Heavenly Father as we thank you humbly once more for Your graciousness to us... So we also ask for fresh forgiveness this day for those times when we have not shown compassion, for those attitudes in our lives where we put ourselves first...

We take a moment in silence & confess our sins..

Lord take us as You find us... All our fears and failures

Fill our lives again...we give our lives to follow , Everything we believe in...Now we surrender again.

We hear the good news of the gospel that in Christ our sins are forgiven. Amen we watch a video entitled Change the world.

Video- 'Change the world'

Children's address ... Message in a bottle...

I am not sure if you have ever seen one of these... a ship in a bottle, we picked this up many years ago as something to help us

remember a very special holiday for Aileen & I. It's amazing how they get it in there isn't it..?

But I also been thinking recently of how sometimes people have used bottles to send messages... Yes I've read about people who were ship wrecked on deserted islands & they have scribbled a message onto something & put it in a bottle & thrown it into the ocean , hoping that someone would find it & rescue them....

Well I think that a man named Harold Myers must have read those old shipwreck stories too because while he & his wife were on a cruise in the Caribbean he decided to try it out himself. Yes he took 3 bottles & placed a message with his name, address & a dollar inside each bottle. The dollar was to pay the postage so that the person who found the message would write to him & tell him where they found it. Next, he put a cork in the bottles, sealed them with wax, & threw them over the side of the ship into the ocean. His friends all teased him saying that this was a waste of time..it was just throwing good money into the ocean.

Well, what happened to those bottles is quite amazing. Of those 3 bottles he threw into the ocean, 2 were found & he received a reply from the person who found it. Two out of three! That's amazing! Harold said *To tell you the truth," I was shocked. I guess I really never expected to hear from anybody at all."*

Now in this morning's service we are thinking about God's mission to the world... & shortly we are going to hear how Jesus went about throughout many towns & village sharing the good news about how God loved people & how He was going to make everything right... & then Jesus showed them this by healing those who were sick & setting people free from all sorts of bad things... Then Jesus told his friends the disciples to go & do the same...& he wants us to share that good news too.

But sometimes I think we are a bit afraid to do that...sometimes we think that no one will listen... no one will hear...

Well Harold Myers friends thought that too didn't they? They thought that probably no one would ever read those messages... But 2 out of 3 bottles were found... people even got in touch with Harold.... Lets never give up trying to show people God's love... & share with them what Jesus has done ...

We are now going to sing our hymn of praise, God forgave my sin in Jesus name & following that Alison will read our gospel reading.

Hymn 'God forgave my sin'

God forgave my sin in Jesus' name,
I've been born again in Jesus' name;
And in Jesus' name I come to you
To share His love as He told me to.

He said: 'Freely, freely, you have received,
Freely, freely give;
Go in My name, and because you believe
Others will know that I live.'

All power is given in Jesus' name,
In earth and heaven in Jesus' name;
And in Jesus' name I come to you
To share His power as He told me to.

He said: 'Freely, freely, you have received,
Freely, freely give;
Go in My name, and because you believe
Others will know that I live.'

Reading Matthew 9:35- 10:8 Jesus went through all the towns & villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom & healing every disease & sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed & helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

10 Jesus called his 12 disciples to him & gave them authority to drive out impure spirits & to heal every disease & sickness. These are the names of the 12 apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) & his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, & his brother John; Philip & Bartholomew; Thomas & Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, & Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot & Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

These 12 Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

Sermon

I don't know if you have loved the slogans or if by now you are totally fed up with them... ***Stay at home, protect the NHS & save lives... Stay alert control the virus & save lives...*** But whether you love them or loathe them one thing is for sure... you couldn't miss them for it seemed like they were everywhere for a time... Recited time & time again... Just to get the message

through ... And so even if we didn't really like them... they did their job for a time...

But what about now... now when life feels like it's getting back in slow hesitant steps towards ...normal... how will we remind each other that the virus is still out there.. & that we need to be alert & help keep each other safe.... for as the days go on & things look more normal it can be more difficult to remember the danger...

It isn't pleasant to think upon, but the bible speaks clearly about the real danger of living our lives without God...of how without Him we are all lost... & that this eventually leads to eternal separation from the God of life & love (Mt25:41). It was because God knew the danger that we were all in that He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to be our saviour. And when Jesus came, we see from this passage in Matthew's gospel that, He not only felt peoples' pressing pains due to illness & poverty but He also saw deeper, to the root of humanities problems... the spiritual disease of sin. So Jesus came not with a slogan but with a message, a message that the kingdom of God was at hand... that God was about to initiate the most vital part of His saving plan for this lost world... For the Messiah, God's suffering saviour, had come to set people free... a new kingdom was breaking into the lost world.

Like all of you, while I pray that scientists will be able to develop a safe widely available vaccine for Covid 19, I have no idea when this will be or if it will ever happen. But if it does, if next week or next month we hear on the news that a vaccine has been found I am sure that there will still be a fair sized delay in getting everything ready & getting all the organisation done so that people can, bit by bit, begin to be vaccinated. And we would

understand that certain groups would be offered the vaccine first, those who needed it most... And in a sense that is what we see here in our bible passage this morning.

Yes here in Matthews gospel we are given a little picture taken from a specific time, a time before Jesus had gone to the cross & so a time when the full message of salvation wasn't in place... & yet the first tastes of it were available.... good news of hope... good fruit of physical, emotional & spiritual healing & deliverance. A new king had come & in these first verses of chapter ten we see Jesus, the new king, send out his disciples as heralds to proclaim to the Jewish people that the offer of salvation was just around the corner... And so there was urgency, get ready.... there is hope....there is healing...a new kingdom is breaking in...

During our time in lockdown I tried to get every day for some form of exercise & most days I succeeded. However occasionally because I was very busy or tired I didn't get out for my run or walk and I usually noticed the difference in my head & my heart. Aren't there some things that we know are important and yet we forget or grow tired of doing them? Perhaps we are finding that now with the social distancing... perhaps we have had enough or perhaps we are growing a bit complacent...

I think it can be easy as Christians to grow a bit complacent or too comfortable with this world & forget the fact that Jesus came to save & change it. Jesus was never complacent... He was compassionate (Mt9:36) & that word compassion in the original Greek text means something like he felt the peoples pain in his gut. Jesus saw the needs around Him & He felt it deep within. However I have to admit that while I like to think of myself as a compassionate person that I know at times I have not felt

enough those deep physical & spiritual needs around me. Perhaps, as terrible as the past months have been, they have also helped lots of us look outwards again to those many people in need.

I have to admit that while I love gardens I am not a great gardener! I don't mind mowing the lawn, but I am not that good at anything else! So I remember looking around at a particular overgrown part of the manse garden in Brookeborough & thinking that would be quite a job! Maybe I was inwardly praying hard, but at the last Circuit executive the manse garden was brought up & someone suggested a team come round to help & so on one bright sunny evening the job that I had looked terrified at for months was sorted out by a group of men who had the right equipment & the right knowledge.

The job of sharing & showing God's kingdom is immense & yes a bit scary! I think that many Christians can often feel like I did looking out at that bramble infested part of our garden... We can feel intimidated, weak & perhaps even that the job is impossible. Perhaps we have even heard those voices in our heads telling us that there is little point sharing Jesus these days because people won't listen... But the truth is that Jesus here tells us (Mt9:37) that the *harvest is plentiful*, there are those who will listen, there are those who feel their need, who are searching for meaning. And some more good news, today, this passage tells us that we are not called to try & do everything ourselves. In fact Jesus tells us to '*Ask the Lord of the harvest...to send out workers into his harvest field.*' Yes our part in seeing more of God's kingdom come begins in prayer... praying for those in need yes, but also importantly praying that God would raise up new workers for the harvest fields... Over the past months many Christians have been praying for our NHS staff & keyworkers,

let us not grow tired of doing that... let's keep it up & in fact let's pray for health workers in other countries too ...like India & Brazil & others who are the new epicentre of the epidemic.

However as we consistently pray for health workers, let's also pray that God would raise up many more Christians to share in the work of spiritual care... Let's pray for more evangelists, whether that is people who can preach or people who can sit with on a telephone call with a friend & listen & tell the story of how Jesus has touched their own life. Let's pray for more pastors, whether that be someone joining our pastoral care team or it be someone just checking in regularly with their neighbour & praying for them. Let's pray for more people to share in disciplining others, whether that be helping with a bible study or small group or seeking to be a mentor for a young Christian. Let's pray for more workers in the harvest fields.... Maybe you have had enough of slogans... but let me leave you with one anyway... Stay compassionate... keep praying ...and we will see Jesus save lives....

So we turn to prayer....

Prayers

Lord we thank you that Jesus' heart broke for those he saw around Him... Father God forgive us when our hearts are complacent or comfortable & touch us again with that your Spirit that our hearts would beat with love & that our hands would be strong to help

We continue in prayer now as we pray for others... And firstly we pray for one of our Methodist World development overseas partners Kopila-Nepal. They work amongst lower caste & Dalit single mothers & widows. They do much you might expect by

addressing livelihoods, rights & education but they also give support for those with mental health. Many of the women are isolated & even shunned. When Kopila has been unable to visit due to lockdown, the women's isolation & suffering may have been even more... Let us pray for our partners at this time.

Lord, forgive us that we look at poverty in such a simple way sometimes. We simply see poverty as a lack of money or opportunity. But we do not always appreciate the suffering it imposes or scars it leaves.

We pray for women, everywhere, who whose mental health problems have been caused by poverty or whose symptoms cannot be treated because of poverty. Thank you for Bina & her staff in Kopila who treat the whole person. May Kopila be able to pick up the pieces quickly when they return to the field. Amen.

We continue in prayer as we think of our world & pray particularly for those nations now facing the brunt of the Covid 19 epidemic. We pray especially for Brazil & other nations of S America & for India.

Lord God as we have prayed for healthcare workers in our own land so we ask that You would also protect those who are working to save lives across our world, sometimes with scant resources or protective equipment.

We pray too for our own nation & as we emerge from lockdown towards a 'new normal' asking that You would continue to help everyone be mindful of the possible dangers. Help us continue to think of others & abide by government guidelines.

We also continue to remember the scourge of racism in our world & we ask that you would help us fulfil the recently passed resolution at Methodist conference that ... *We call on our Methodist People, throughout Ireland, to engage prayerfully, peacefully, publicity (recognising the restrictions due to Covid.19) and politically to work together with others to eliminate racism in our world, our own communities and in our own hearts.* Lord help us show you compassion & care to all.

And so we bring to God those who have requested our prayers, for Timothy Harte..... For Daniel Kidson.... For Collette For Hannah Smyth..... For baby Rosie.... For Christine.... For Mark Armstrong For John For Pat..... For Margaret Kennedy.... For Lou & for Elsbeth White.

Lord God as we thank you for your merciful work in these situations, so we continue to pray that You would bring healing in Jesus name.

And we bring our prayers together in the words of the Lord's prayer *Our Father*....

Our closing hymn is *Go forth & tell*....

Closing Hymn

Go forth and tell! O Church of God, awake!
God's saving news to all the nations take;
Proclaim Christ Jesus, Saviour, Lord, and King,
That all the world His worthy praise may sing.

Go forth and tell! God's love embraces all;
He will in grace respond to all who call;

How shall they call if they have never heard
The gracious invitation of His Word!

Go forth and tell! Some still in darkness lie;
In wealth or want, in sin they live and die.
Give us, O Lord, concern of heart and mind,
A love like Yours which cares for all mankind.

Go forth and tell! The doors are open wide;
Share God's good gifts—with people long denied;
Live out your life as Christ, your Lord, shall choose,
Your ransomed powers for His sole glory use.

J.E Seddon

Closing blessing

So we hear from Galatians 6 verses 9-10

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

We close our service by sharing the grace together.