

SUNDAY 19^h JULY 2020 'The power of praise'

Welcome & Announcements

Call to worship Sing to the Lord (video)

Praise Song 'Blessed be your name'

Prayer

Video (The gift of worship)

Children's thought

Hymn MP 170 Give thanks with a grateful heart (Sun 5/5/19)

Scripture Reading Acts 16:13 & 25-34

Sermon

Prayers

Hymn HP 536 O for a heart to praise my God (Sun 30/6/19)

Blessing

Announcements- just a reminder that anyone who would like to come to a socially distanced church picnic in the manse garden next Sunday afternoon at 12 (weather dependent) will need to let Colin know by Thursday coming (23rd).

We also wish Alex Deering congratulations on her wedding yesterday.

Finally as we prepare to try & open our building for Sunday morning services on the 23rd August we have made a short video,

available on the website, that will help everyone get an idea of how the services will proceed. We encourage everyone to have a look so that you are familiar with the way things will be working.

Call to worship Psalm 33

Let the godly sing for joy to the LORD;

it is fitting for the pure to praise him.

² Praise the LORD with melodies on the lyre;

make music for him on the ten-stringed harp.

³ Sing a new song of praise to him;

play skilfully on the harp, and sing with joy.

⁴ For the word of the LORD holds true,

and we can trust everything he does.

⁵ He loves whatever is just and good;

the unfailing love of the LORD fills the earth.

The LORD merely spoke, and the heavens were created.

He breathed the word, and all the stars were born.

¹³ The LORD looks down from heaven, and sees the whole human race.

²⁰ We put our hope in the LORD. He is our help and our shield.

²¹ In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.

²² Let your unfailing love surround us, LORD, for our hope is in you alone.

Praise Song- Blessed be Your name

Blessed Be Your Name, In the land that is plentiful

Where Your streams of abundance flow, Blessed be Your name

Blessed Be Your name, When I'm found in the desert place

Though I walk through the wilderness, Blessed Be Your name

*Every blessing You pour out, I'll turn back to praise
When the darkness closes in, Lord, Still I will say
Blessed be the name of the Lord, Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord, Blessed be Your glorious name.*

Blessed be Your name, When the sun's shining down on me
When the world's 'all as it should be', Blessed be Your name
Blessed be Your name, On the road marked with suffering
Though there's pain in the offering, Blessed be Your name

*Every blessing You pour out, I'll turn back to praise
When the darkness closes in, Lord, Still I will say
Blessed be the name of the Lord, Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord, Blessed be Your glorious name
Blessed be the name of the Lord, Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord, Blessed be Your glorious name*

*You give and take away, You give and take away
My heart will choose to say, Lord, blessed be Your name.*

Opening Prayer

Blessed be the name of the Lord, Blessed be Your Name..
Lord we come this morning to worship You , the God of glory, the
King of righteousness. The LORD who merely spoke, and the
heavens were created. The God who is forever faithful...the One
who is our help & shield... Holy God we come to worship You this
day, we bring You our praise Yet as even as we do so we

acknowledge our need once more for a fresh touch of Your
precious grace... For we know that often our hearts are not
afame with thanks & praise... we confess that we can be prone to
grumbling... prone to selfishness ...we confess our sins to You now
(silence) Lord forgive us & renew our hearts this day... help us
to worship You in spirit and in truth. Amen

And now we are going to watch a video entitled the gift of
worship & that will be followed by our children's talk.

Video 'the gift of worship)

Children's thought Do you remember one of these? Yes it's one
of our old order of services... Many Churches printed a sheet like
this every week so that people would know what was going to
happen next. But sometimes I wondered if Churches really
needed to do that because most services I know had the same
things happening every week... You know somebody might have
said that they knew what was coming next so well that they could
do in their sleep. In fact, maybe some people did do it in their
sleep! Not really...I was only kidding. Or was I?

Now, don't get me wrong. There is nothing wrong with having a
worship plan unless the plan becomes more important to us than
worship. Once I heard about a church that got into a huge
argument because the Minister changed the time when they took
the offering during the worship service. "We've never done it
that way before," the people cried. You see, some people are

more concerned with WHEN & HOW we take the offering than they are with WHY we take the offering. Sadly sometimes traditions become more important to people than worshipping God. Now this isn't a new problem. Even Jesus faced this problem. One day a group of people gathered around Jesus to listen to him as he taught. Some of the religious leaders noticed that Jesus' disciples had forgotten to wash their hands before they ate. They were really upset and asked Jesus why his disciples were not keeping the tradition of washing their hands before eating.

Jesus answered those religious leaders by telling them that a clean heart was more important than clean hands. NOW of course Jesus wasn't saying it isn't important to wash your hands before you eat. Today we know that it is very important... But Jesus was saying that keeping the commandments of God is more important than keeping our own traditions.

When we come back to Church I hope that we won't be so worried about WHEN & HOW we do things in our services than we are about WHY we do them. I hope we will always remember that true worship comes from our heart....

Dear Father, help us to remember that You look at our hearts, help us to worship You with all that we are.... Amen.

Now we are going to sing give thanks with a grateful heart.

Praise Give thanks with a grateful heart
Give thanks to the Holy One
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son

Give thanks with a grateful heart
Give thanks to the Holy One
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son

And now let the weak say, "I am strong."
Let the poor say, "I am rich
Because of what the Lord has done for us"

And now let the weak say, "I am strong."
Let the poor say, "I am rich
Because of what the Lord has done for us"

Give thanks with a grateful heart (to the grateful heart)
Give thanks to the Holy One (to the Holy One)
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son

Give thanks with a grateful heart (to the grateful heart)
Give thanks to the Holy One (to the Holy One)
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son

And now let the weak say, "I am strong."
Let the poor say, "I am rich
Because of what the Lord has done for us"

Acts 16:13 & 25-34

On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there....

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. ²⁷ The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul shouted, 'Don't harm yourself! We are all here!'

²⁹ The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ He then brought them out and asked, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'

³¹ They replied, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved - you and your household.' ³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. ³³ At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptised. ³⁴ The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God - he and his whole household.

Sermon The author Leo Buscaglia tells this story about how his father came home one evening saying he had terrible news.... his business partner had fled with the firm's funds leaving his father... thinking that he would have to file for bankruptcy... On hearing the news Leo's mother did something unexpected she went out & sold some jewellery to buy food for a sumptuous

feast... other members of the family scolded her But she told them that "*the time for joy is now, when we need it most, not next week.*" Her courageous act rallied the family...& Leo never forgot what he now calls the fabulous 'misery dinner'.

As we turn once more to focus on the book of Acts & ask what were the early Christians were devoted too.. We find that the early believers were a worshipping joy filled community... And as we read through Acts we discover that often this joy filled praise flowed out from them on occasions which were far from comfortable....Yes throughout the book of Acts we see that the early Christians we marked by joy even when they were abused & persecuted...

This morning's passage from Acts comes as Paul & Silas break new ground in mission as they are led to take the gospel into Europe. Their first major stop in Europe sees them bring the good news of Jesus into Philippi. Now Philippi prided itself as being a '*little Rome*' as it had been colonised by veteran Roman soldiers & so unlike many others places that Paul had been there weren't many Jews. Nevertheless we see the missionaries seek out any Jews or 'godfearers' they could find to bring the gospel to them & so they head to a riverbank where they expect to find any Jews or 'godfearers'. And indeed they do find a group of women who they share with , and who come to know Jesus.

However they soon find themselves in trouble as they heal a slave-girl with an evil spirit & then find that her owners are far

from pleased about the resulting loss of income. Very quickly things turn nasty, they were brought before the magistrates, beaten badly & then thrown into the most secure spot in the jail....So there they were stripped abused beaten and now locked away with their feet in the stocks....and what was their response...? To pray & sing hymns to God....vs25

Yes the early believers were marked by joy filled praise, even, perhaps particularly, in times of persecution & pressure. Now I am not suggesting that persecution or any other difficult time is in itself good for us... but I can't help but reflect on the life of the early Christians & think that there is a temptation today to turn worship & praise into something for ourselves rather than as something for God.... How often do you & I find ourselves critiquing a service rather than entering fully into worship..? How often might we find ourselves saying...? I didn't like that hymn or those songs...or I didn't get much out of that rather than seeking to focus on God & giving Him the praise & worship He deserves..?

Yes our first simple point this morning is that **worship is first of all for God**...our voices are raised in praise..., as someone once said, for the audience of one... The One who is on the throne.. And that's perhaps even more important to remember now than at other times... as our weekly services had to go online...& in a few weeks as they restart but look quite different from what we are used to... As we meet not in our Church but in our hall...as we simply listen to hymns & praise rather than singing out as we normally do... As we quickly leave our building rather than having

that wonderful opportunity to share coffee/tea & chat as we normally love to do.... We may be tempted to feel short changed... we may be tempted to focus on what we aren't allowed to do rather than on those things that we are... So I say to myself & to us all... remember how blessed we are to be able to openly come together & worship God...at all... Let's not forget that for the early Christians... & for so many of our brothers & sisters that freedom is something that they have never enjoyed...

So this morning we remember that worship is firstly for God...it's for His pleasure, to bring Him glory. But it doesn't stop there. I can't be totally sure how Paul & Silas felt that evening as they were beaten & thrown into jail... But I can guess if it was me I wouldn't be feeling great. Yet as they sat that night in their cell they raised their voices to God in prayer & praise. And as they focussed on worshipping God the Lord who was in control began to act.... As the bible commentator, Ajith Fernando, says *'singing helps us focus on the glorious eternal realities that may be clouded by the gloomy temporal realities... when we cannot produce words of our own, we can use the words of others...'*

Yes worship is primarily for God, but God so often allows it to also touch us. So singing or listening to worship, often has a way of bridging that disconnect between our minds & our hearts & lives. Let me put it like this, every time I get on a rollercoaster ... I feel nervous, even though my mind tells me that it's perfectly safe. Yet as we start to climb up that steep slope towards the top & I look down over the side at the drop & I can't help but

feel my heart thumping with anxiety. You see what I see around me influences me more than what I know to be true.

And that's the same with life... it's all well hearing & even sort of knowing that God loves us... BUT we really need to experience that truth in our hearts....as Fernando says... *'Songs help truth travel down to the heart, & the use of music, the language of the heart, helps speed that process.'*

So I can't wait to be able to get back to singing together in our building... I can't wait to see a full praise group lead us in a time of worship & the choir sing out one of their fabulous pieces... But sadly for the moment we simply won't be able to do that... we won't be able to fill our church building with songs of praise.... But you can fill your living room.... or your garden... or even your shed... We can lift up our voices in worship in so many places... where it's safer...especially outside where perhaps others might hear it... Oh I can hear you say....I don't know about that... I mean the Church building is the place for praise isn't it.. Is it? How about an inner cell in a Philippian jail....? Isn't that a place to let praise ring out to God? Isn't that a place where God can be glorified & indeed other prisoners can be influenced by songs of hope. (vs25) isn't that a place where God can work...sending an earthquake, opening prison doors & bringing a jailer & his entire household to faith.... ?

The apostles were heading for a river bank to praise God, but ended up bruised & beaten praising God in an inner cell. But still

God got the glory & still lives were changed.. As we move forward through the summer & into whatever may come.. I ask God to help us all remember to focus on Him wherever we be, & let's remember the power in simply praising Him... So let us pray... Lord overwhelm our hearts once more with Your love & grace so that our voices, our attitudes & our actions are filled with grace, joy & worship... Lord draw us closer to You we pray. amen

We continue in prayer now as we pray for others & we begin by using a prayer from our Methodist Church for this season of 'unlocking'

Psalm 139 v 13 – 14 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

Philippians 4 v 6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Prayer - Father God we pause today to bring before you those we know and love who need reminded that you know them, you see them & you love them..... In a time where we find ourselves looking at our screens more than ever, when the comparison game is easy to get caught up in, when life appears to be what is portrayed in a picture or in words – God may our identity be found only in you...we pray.

For those who feel lonely or isolated – God may they know your presence....For those for whom fear, anxiety and worry are all too familiar – God bring peace, hope and joy.....For those who need

someone to talk to – God we pray courage to ask for help and providence of the right person at the right time.

Father God – you made us, you know us, you love us. We are fearfully & wonderfully made! Protect our hearts & minds. Bring healing & hope to those who need it in this very moment. Open our eyes & our ears to the prompting of your Spirit & compel us to action.

Just as we pray for others we also pray for ourselves.
Be honest with Father God about how you are feeling today.
Talk to someone if you need to.
Do something that will bring you life and joy.

We turn now to focus on those who have requested our prayers.

We give thanks for God's help shown to **Hannah Smyth, Helena, Colette & Mark Armstrong**. We continue to bring each of them & their families before God asking that He will complete the good work of healing that He has begun in them.

We are thankful for the present condition of **Timothy Harte** & we pray that God would continue to do a mighty work in his body & life. We also pray for young **Daniel Kidson** as he receives treatment for cancer. We pray for complete forever healing. We continue praying for **baby Rosie**. We pray too for **Shirley Bristow, Nan Irwin & Tina Donaldson. Jerry & Jean McHaffie**.

We also remember **Bernie McKee, Margaret Kennedy, Lou Kennedy & Marta Kennedy**.....We remember the family of **Elsbeth White** following her death. We pray especially for Marion her daughter. We also remember all others who have experienced loss in these past days.

We finish with the Lord's Prayer

Closing Hymn

O for a heart to praise my God,
a heart from sin set free;
a heart that's sprinkled with the blood
so freely shed for me:

A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
my great Redeemer's throne;
where only Christ is heard to speak,
where Jesus reigns alone:

A humble, lowly, contrite heart,
believing, true, and clean,
which neither life nor death can part
from him that dwells within:

A heart in every thought renewed,
and full of love divine;
perfect and right and pure and good –
a copy, Lord, of thine.

Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart,
come quickly from above;
write thy new name upon my heart,
thy new best name of Love.

Closing blessing

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father, to him be glory and power for ever and ever! **Amen.**

We say the grace together...

