

Bangor & Holyhead Methodist Circuit
Sunday Worship Sheet, 2nd February 2025

Our worship for this week was written by Simon Charters.

You may wish to have your Bible to hand. Please note the hymns are now at the back of the sheet for ease of printing. CCLI licence 556292

Theme: The most excellent way – called, capable (encouraged?) and careful

Call to worship: (Psalm 71 vs 5 – 6): For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth. Upon you I have leaned from my birth; it was you who took me from my mother's womb. My praise is continually of you.

Hymn: **StF 228** Hail to the Lord's anointed, great David's greater son

Opening prayers:

My Lord and my God, you are my refuge: a safe space to escape from danger. You are my righteousness: speaking truth into my life. You are my rock: the ground on which I build my life. You are my rescuer: making haste to help me. I believe that you have protected me from birth, you who have done great things for me, whose love never ends, receive my thanks and praise. Amen.

Lord our God, you have known me from before I was born, and I come to open my life before you now. I come as part of your family to hear you speak. Lead me on: call me to the place where you want me. Stretch out your hand and touch my mouth that I might praise you and speak for you, through Jesus, my redeemer. Amen.

A prayer of confession: For all the times I have doubted you; the times I have doubted your answer to my prayers because I did not see a 'miracles'; the times I saw only what I want to see; forgive me, good Lord.

For the times I listen only to the people who agree with me, and the times I will listen to anyone but you: forgive me, good Lord.

For the times when I do not speak when I should; and the times I speak when I should remain silent. forgive me, good Lord. ^[1]_[SEP] Amen.

Readings: Jeremiah 1: 4-10
Luke 4:16 – 30
1 Corinthians 13: 1-13

Hymn: **StF 244** Blessed are the pure in heart

Reflection:

Today's readings pick up a theme that you may have already encountered in a covenant service, and comes under three headings: we are called, we are equipped, and we are challenged to use the gifts that we're given wisely.

Let's look at our calling, through Jeremiah's eyes. He had been born into a priestly family and was destined to be a priest himself, but it feels as if the priesthood would be a career rather

than a vocation – but then God called. Jeremiah protested against God on the ground of his youthfulness; after all, he was brought up in a society that valued the wisdom of older people. But this was no whim or random act of God, Jeremiah was called as a vital organ of God's word. His message, also, was frequently at odds with society around him – threatening doom and gloom when everything appeared to be fine, and then spreading joy – the promise of redemption - when they were enslaved. But he wasn't to know that when God called him.

We know the story of Paul – setting out to persecute the Christian church and being turned 180 degrees towards God. What were God's words to Ananias when told to go and meet Saul? After he protested, God told Ananias: "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel".

As a prophet, the best equipment Jeremiah had was probably his hotline to God, a relationship that clearly engulfed his very soul. There seems to be a complete unity of his spiritual and emotional being along with his prophetic ministry.

Paul seems to have been equipped with an enormous amount of stamina – even though we know he wasn't the strongest of individuals – in order to travel as far and often as he did. And of course he travelled with the word of God, the Lord travelling with him and strengthening him when needed.

Jesus, of course, had all these strengths in abundance – God incarnate, he had already been tested in the wilderness and found blameless, and although his ministry was still only just beginning, he was confident in the message he would bring to the world. Like Jeremiah and Paul, he was called to witness in a hostile place and time, to people with different expectations from God's. All three were equipped to give that message to those who would listen. The problem, too often, was that people just would not listen.

Jeremiah brought prophecies based upon the behaviour of Judah at the time. So, despite his gifts of warnings given to his people they continued to worship false prophets and idols and continued in their immoral ways. For ignoring these gifts, the people were harshly punished.

Jesus declared himself the fulfilment of the message, but this could not be accepted by those he taught. In particular, they could not accept that he is a gift to the whole world, a gift to be shared and broadcast, not just to be kept solely for the benefit of a closed society. They become angry and aggressive, and he had to leave. They threw away their gift.

At Corinth, the church had grown with many spiritual gifts, yet it is these very gifts which are causing factions. In a society built on a lot of wealth, personal possessions were important, and as spiritual gifts were given to those in the church, they saw these as rewards and signs of their own virtue rather than something to be shared. This passage, often used at weddings can itself be misinterpreted as a treatise on love, when it is meant to convey how gifts are to be used. Paul points out that they mean nothing unless each act and word is given with love.

I believe we, too, have all been called. Did we feel called when we got up this morning? Maybe? Maybe not. Jeremiah, Paul and even Jesus had doubts at times, but we cannot deny

their calling, and neither did they once God had overcome those doubts. I believe we all have the strength to do what God calls us to do. We may all argue that it is nothing as spectacular as those we read about, but it doesn't need to be, for we have been placed here and now to exercise a ministry that is uniquely ours, guided by God and strengthened by his Word.

And what about the gifts we're given? Listening, praying, musicianship, reading, organising, administrating, sympathising, laughing, giving time just to be with someone? None of these are for our glory; they are given to us, in God's love, for us to give to others in love.

We have been called, and we are equipped by God. We have been given gifts that are unique to us and needed by someone close by. We are challenged, then, to go out and use them in love. Let us take up that challenge where we are and as we are able

Prayers for the world and the Church, thankful of God's goodness.

Loving God, we know you are the giver of every good and perfect gift. For the people who have helped us on our way, for the church family who have nurtured us, and for all from whom we receive love, joy and affection, Lord, we thank you.

O Lord our God, our praise shall always be of you. Amen. We pray for the poor and for prisoners, for the unemployed and for the homeless, for those who will go without sustenance today, and for those who have the power to feed them. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who live in places of conflict, for refugees and those fleeing war, for those who experience conflict at home or at work, and for those with the power to negotiate peace. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who have been oppressed, for victims of crime, both disclosed and secret, for children, women and men who feel unsafe, and for those who administer justice. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for those we know who are in need, for those who are ill or housebound, for the very young and very old, and for all those who care for them. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for ourselves, for faith and hope and love to flood our lives, and for the grace to pass those gifts of God to others. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We ask all these prayers on the name of your son, our saviour Jesus. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Hymn: **StF 663** I, the Lord of sea and sky

Blessing:

Go before us, O Lord, to protect and inspire, as we set out with your word on our tongue. Give us the discernment of prophets and the voice of messengers, and fill us with your love that passes all understanding. Amen.

Hymn 228

- 1 Hail to the Lord's Anointed,
great David's greater Son !
Hail, in the time appointed,
his reign on earth begun !
He comes to break oppression,
to set the captive free,
to take away transgression,
and rule in equity.
- 2 He comes, with succour speedy,
to those who suffer wrong ;
to help the poor and needy,
and bid the weak be strong ;
to give them songs for sighing,
their darkness turn to light,
whose souls, condemned and dying,
are precious in his sight.
- 3 He shall come down like showers
upon the fruitful earth ;
love, joy, and hope, like flowers,
spring in his path to birth ;
before him, on the mountains,
shall peace the herald go ;
and righteousness, in fountains,
from hill to valley flow.
- 4 Kings shall fall down before him,
and gold and incense bring ;
all nations shall adore him,
his praise all people sing ;
to him shall prayer unceasing
and daily vows ascend,
his kingdom still increasing,
a kingdom without end.
- 5 O'er every foe victorious,
he on his throne shall rest ;
from age to age more glorious,
all-blessing and all-blest.
The tide of time shall never
his covenant remove ;
his name shall stand for ever,
his changeless name of Love.

James Montgomery (1771–1854)
from *Psalm 72*

Hymn 244

- 1 Blest are the pure in heart,
for they shall see our God :
the secret of the Lord is theirs ;
their soul is Christ's abode.

- 2 The Lord, who left the heavens
our life and peace to bring,
to dwell on earth in lowliness,
our pattern and our King.
 - 3 Still to the lowly soul
he does himself impart,
and for his dwelling and his throne
chooses the pure in heart.
 - 4 Lord, we your presence seek,
a vision of your face ;
give us a pure and lowly heart,
a temple of your grace.
- vv. 1, 3 John Keble (1792–1866)
vv. 2, 4 William John Hall

Hymn 663

- 1 I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
my hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them ?
Whom shall I send ?
Here I am, Lord.
Is it I, Lord ?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord,
if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.
 - 2 I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain ;
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send ?
 - 3 I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts are satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send ?
- Daniel L. Schutte (b. 1947)