

Bangor & Holyhead Methodist Circuit

Sunday Worship Sheet – Sunday 28th February 2021

Our Worship for this week was compiled and written by Rev. Rosemary Nunn.
You may wish to have your Bible to hand.

Call to worship

Jesus said, “Those who would come after me must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” *Pause*

Lead me, Lord. Help me to follow you. *Pause*

You denied yourself. Help me to follow you. *Pause*

You took up the cross. Help me to follow you.

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Hymn: StF.18. *Be still and know that I am God*

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| 1. Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God. | 3. In you, O Lord, I put my trust.
In you, O Lord, I put my trust.
In you, O Lord, I put my trust. |
| 2. I am the Lord who saves and heals.
I am the Lord who saves and heals.
I am the Lord who saves and heals. | |

Anonymous

Based on Psalm 46:10–11

Reproduced from Singing the Faith

Electronic Words Edition, number 18

Prayer of adoration. *This is short, so take time to linger over it!*

Creative God of past, present and future, keeper of promises:
how we love you.

Son of Man, the way, the truth and the life: how we love you.

Holy Spirit, living Power within: how we love you.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, your unique relationship – open to us: how we love you. **Amen.**

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Bible reading:  **Mark 8:31-38**

Reflection

A butler in a posh house was brilliant at his job – unless he'd been on the booze! One night, the dinner guests included a top politician. Unfortunately, the butler could barely stay upright, never mind look after guests. Horrified, the lady of the house handed him a note: “You are drunk and disgusting. Please leave the room at once.” The butler read it through bleary eyes, shuffled round the room, plonked it in front of the distinguished guest, and said, “Her ladyship asked me to give you this.”

He got the wrong end of the stick – rather like Peter, who was inclined to make a habit of it. In our gospel reading, Jesus spoke to his disciples about his own future. He spoke frankly and plainly of suffering, of rejection, of death. The disciples were probably too shocked to hear his words about resurrection.

Peter had just identified Jesus as the Messiah – the long-promised, God-appointed saviour of the Jewish nation. He'd got something right! But in Peter's eyes, suffering, rejection and premature death simply weren't part of the picture for the Messiah, who would be a hero

destined for power, acclaim, success. So Peter argued – full of concern for his leader and friend. But Jesus wasn't having it! He KNEW what lay ahead, he KNEW Peter had got the wrong end of the stick, and he moved the conversation on to talk about *their* future rather than his, now including “the crowd” – us too! “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”

How we devalue words! During Lent, people often talk of “denying themselves”. Chocolate is a favourite choice for voluntary deprivation, often sustained by dreams of a huge chocolatey binge at Easter. The wrong end of the stick again! Jesus wasn't talking about the temporary loss of treats, but a whole new pattern for living, with self-interest, not chocolate, as the first thing to go.

“Take up your cross”, he said. Another devalued expression! People sometimes speak of “the cross I have to bear” to describe something they just have to get on with because it's what life has thrown at them. It can include anything from the relatively trivial to the truly awful – a partner with a time-consuming hobby or annoying habits, a sudden drop in income, a difficult relationship, coping with profound disappointment or tragic loss,

People carried a cross on their way to slow, agonising and shameful public execution, utterly alone and yet surrounded by crowds of mocking and accusing faces and voices. Barely imaginable! Jesus' talk of “taking up” a cross wasn't about a passive “putting up” with the hardships of life, no matter how heartbreaking those hardships might be. It was about a voluntary assent to an invitation that would be life-changing and potentially life-curtailling.

There are still places where Christians knowingly put their lives in danger for their active faith in Jesus, though for 21st century citizens of the United Kingdom it is more a case of putting our lifestyles than our lives on the line. Lent is a good time for examining our commitment to Jesus and seriously asking ourselves whether there are aspects of our lives which need “putting to death” – areas where we may need to admit we've had “the wrong end of the stick” about what Jesus asks of us. Examples might possibly include an obsession with possessions, the need to always be right, a cherished attitude which is far from Jesus-like, the need to be in the limelight (or the background), lack of generosity with time or money, ways of speaking about or acting towards people different from ourselves,

Take a few moments now to speak to God about what needs to “die” in *your* life. Knowing that he is more than willing and more than able, ask him to show you what needs to change, ask for his forgiveness, and ask for his enabling strength for the future, so that you may become a truer disciple of Jesus. You may like to use a finger to trace a cross on the palm of your hand as a sign of commitment, before praying these words:

Lord, for myself; in living power remake me,
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne;
past put behind me, for the future take me,
Lord of my life, to live for Christ alone.

Hymn 462. *Come with me, come wander*

Come with me, come wander, come welcome the world
where strangers might smile or where stones may be hurled ;
come leave what you cling to, lay down what you clutch
and find, with hands empty, that hearts can hold much.

*Sing hey for the carpenter leaving his tools !
Sing hey for the pharisees leaving their rules !
Sing hey for the fishermen leaving their nets !
Sing hey for the people who leave their regrets !*

Come walk in my company, come sleep by my side,
come savour a lifestyle with nothing to hide ;
come sit at my table and eat with my friends,
discovering that love which the world never ends.

Come share in my laughter, come close to my fears,
come find yourself washed with the kiss of my tears ;
come stand close at hand while I suffer and die
and find in three days how I never will lie.

Come leave your possessions, come share out your treasure,
come give and receive without method or measure ;
come loose every bond that's resisting the Spirit,
enabling the earth to be yours to inherit.

John L. Bell (*b.* 1949) and Graham Maule (*b.* 1958)
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Iona Community, Glasgow G2 3DH Scotland. www.wgrg.co.uk

Today's **Intercessions** are in the form of an "unpacked" version of the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father in heaven.

Thank you, Father, for letting us get this close; for letting us call you Abba, Dad. We're thrilled to be part of the family, with Jesus as our older brother. May the family likeness become clearer in us day by day.

Hallowed be your name.

May your name be holy in a world inclined to recognize holiness in the wrong things, worshipping money, sex, celebrity and power. Instead, may our vision be filled with the holiness of your beauty, tenderness and love.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

This is the most exciting prayer we could ever make, that your alternative way of living should be established here, among us, starting here and now. Help us, your Church, to be the test-bed of the kingdom, where we try out your commands and promises and find them to be true.

Give us today our daily bread so that *everyone* on earth has what they need to flourish.

We think of the world's hungry outsiders, and ask that you will show us ways of insisting that the co-existence of riches and poverty, of well-filled and starving is not inevitable and must be overturned.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Help us to recognise our sin as addiction to ourselves, often at the expense of others. Then, Father, forgive, not with an easy tolerance but with the rich, hard, shocking, life-changing forgiveness that we see coming from the cross. And give us grace to pass that forgiveness on to others.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

Not just the little stuff – the failings and foibles to which we are all prone – but the heavy-duty, deep darkness that fails to push with determination for your reign of justice and love all over the world. Help us to resist and oppose evil wherever we see it, including in ourselves.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever.

Thank you that the outcome of the struggle isn't in doubt: the glory of resurrection has demonstrated once and for all that nothing can ultimately hold back your reign of love. Alleluia, alleluia, amen, amen.

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Hymn: StF.272 *From heaven you came helpless babe*

A version of this hymn recorded by Graham Kendrick himself, specifically for worship at home during the lockdown, can be found using this link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SsSG_eEyP04

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| <p>1. 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.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p> | <p>3. Come see his hands and his feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered.</p> <p>4. 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.</p> |
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2. 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.

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)
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Sending Out

God our shelter in the storm, protect us! God our Rock, be our strength!
God our Parent, nurture and discipline us! God our Life-breath, inspire us!
God, our Beginning and our End, hold us forever in your love. **Amen.**

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