

**Bangor & Holyhead Methodist Circuit**  
**Sunday Worship Sheet 26<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

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.

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**Introduction:** Today's gospel reading shows Jesus being, apparently, a bit "spikey" – what's it all about?

**Hymn: StF 477 Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart**

[Teach Me to Dance to the Beat of Your Heart \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)

**Opening prayers:**

Lord God, we come to you as individuals, beautifully crafted and unique, each with our interests, ambitions and desires. But we also come to you as a community, children of one Father, gathered under the cross of Christ and joined together by the Spirit.

As we sing, pray and listen, help us to understand better what it means to be governed by your Spirit, rather than by lifeless law or our base desires. Above all, make us aware of the ways you seek to lead us in freedom and love.

We thank you that in your loving kindness you have blessed us with the gift of freedom: freedom to think, freedom to act, freedom to be still, freedom to choose – even freedom to make mistakes.

Thank you for believing in us, loving God. We thank you that even when we make mistakes, even when our failures and our sins entangle us by their consuming power, your love for us is so great that you gave Jesus to us to set us free, for to freedom we were called.

As we worship you today, may your freedom fill our lives and thrill our hearts and may we live this freedom, in your name and to your praise and glory. **Amen.**

**A prayer of confession:**

Even as we think of those mistakes, we know that we falter and we fail. We know that we set out with good intentions but turn back and look the other way. We mean to be committed when we make our promises, but we confess we too often fall by the wayside. So, again, we thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit: Spirit of Truth, help us to admit and face up to the mistakes we've made. Spirit of Grace, forgive us these mistakes and restore us to the wonderful creation you would have us be. Spirit of Power, give us strength to turn our faces once again towards you, living and loving, your people on your earth. **Amen**

**Readings: Galatians 5.1,13-25**

**Luke 9.51-62**

**Hymn: StF 728 O God, you search me and you know me**

## Reflection:

Many of you will undoubtedly have heard the quote, often (wrongly) attributed to the golfer, Arnold Palmer: “The more I practice the luckier I get”. It’s an indication of the unseen effort and focus required to achieve the desired result. And you don’t have to be an elite sportsman to understand it – if I don’t keep my concentration around the Christmas family games table, the (grown up) kids and 8-year-old grandchild will run rings around me!

In our Gospel reading, Jesus appears dismissive and critical of the people that find it difficult to accept him. The people of the Samaritan village would rather he went to their holy city, Gerizim, rather than Jerusalem. They take his decision as a slight, but it is simply not in his plan. The Samaritans’ reaction is sufficient to draw the ire of James and John (the “sons of thunder”) but Jesus is already moving on, he has better things to do.

There are then three encounters with those who are quick to talk the talk, but Jesus knows they will falter for various reasons. They will not be as committed as they state; Jesus points out the issues that will prevent them fulfilling their good words.

So, there’s that which can be read from the words and actions of those in this passage, and then there’s what’s going on underneath.

This section from Luke’s gospel is generally thought to be a broad story, using Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem as a structure in which to bring together events of a similar nature. In this way the events portrayed provide focus on a particular aspect of Luke’s message. In this case, that message is Jesus’ focus on the task in hand. He has set his face towards Jerusalem, and he will not be diverted from it, neither (in these examples) to appease an alternative political view or be distracted by a weak following. His determination to follow this course is not in itself visible but is conveyed through his actions.

It’s a focus echoed in Paul’s letter to the Galatians. Local teachers have been diluting Jesus’ message with the requirement to follow Jewish law. Paul is agitated – he does not use the usual greetings but cuts straight to the chase: the message of his letter is the centrality and totality of the gospel of Christ. People who have been saved had no need to follow the practices of a few to be considered Christian; they were free of all man-made expectations.

Paul was strongly emphasising one of the wonders of God’s creativity in us – our diversity. And Paul wanted us to honour that creative diversity through being ourselves – unfettered by man-made rules.

Of course, Paul also makes the warning; freedom from man’s law is not freedom from God’s. It comes at a cost – Jesus dying on the cross – and brings responsibilities. The new life that we live is not ours, but the life of Christ in us. And so the new freedom is, paradoxically, the slavery of love. Our works are no longer a set of dutiful activities through which we are rewarded by salvation (a worldly precept), but the freewill outpouring of that salvation, expressed as we receive the Holy Spirit, deep down, unseen, enabling us to focus on God’s word.

Paul names the famous fruits of the spirit in verse 22, all of which become apparent as we allow the Spirit to guide us and teach us God’s ways.

And Paul has contrasted these with what he calls “works of the flesh” – the activities which occur when the spirit is not allowed to lead us. Yes, we might want these activities to be less evident than the fruits – hidden from sight, even – but even world leaders can’t bury the truth for long.

So, ask yourself, does your life journey reflect these graces – are you following a path that has been laid out for you by God, or by the world? Does your daily journey reflect these graces – through your interaction with those that you meet?

It is always good to remember those key parts of our covenant prayer: “put me to what you will”, and “let me be employed for you or laid aside for you”. In these words, we offer ourselves to His call and to the Spirit’s guidance.

Our calling to be disciples demands that we show those graces to our family, those we meet regularly or casually, even those we don’t like! And we can only genuinely show those graces when we allow the Spirit to focus us on the job in hand, our outward expressions being a natural outpouring of our inner, deep, strength.

### **Prayers of intercession**

Lord God, may we heed your voice and obey your commands, that we may witness to you and your saving power. We pray that all within your church may be enabled to fulfil their vocation. We remember all who are seeking to serve you to the best of their ability, and may your church grow in outreach and number.

We give thanks for all who seek to serve others. We pray for our Queen and, all who are in government. We ask your blessing on all agencies that are striving to bring peace to our world. We remember those who are working with refuges and the poor of the world.

We give thanks for those who have helped us to develop our talents and abilities. We pray for our homes, that they may reflect your grace, goodness and love. We pray for all who have taught us, throughout our lives.

We thank you for our freedom and pray for all who feel frustrated and who feel their vocation has been thwarted through illness, poverty or oppression. May they know that God always has a calling for us – even when the first is not possible. We pray for all who are suffering at this time and ask your blessing upon all who are called to care for the ill and the lonely.

We give thanks that you call us to eternal life and to the joy of your presence in our kingdom. We rejoice in the fellowship of your saints and pray for our loved ones departed. May we all enjoy serving you now and for ever.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our saviour Jesus Christ, Amen

### **Lord’s Prayer**

**Hymn:**        **StF 250**        **Jesus calls us! O’er the tumult of our life’s wild restless sea**

**Blessing:** May the God who created you, the Son who cut the chains and Spirit who longs to fill your life, set you free. And the blessing of God, Creator, Son and Spirit, free you and fill you now and always, that you may walk as children of God. Amen.

### Hymn 477

*Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart,  
teach me to move in the power of your Spirit,  
teach me to walk in the light of your presence,  
teach me to dance to the beat of your heart.  
Teach me to love with your heart of compassion,  
teach me to trust in the word of your promise,  
teach me to hope in the day of your coming,  
teach me to dance to the beat of your heart.*

- 1 You wrote the rhythm of life,  
created heaven and earth ;  
in you is joy without measure.  
So, like a child in your sight,  
I dance to see your delight,  
for I was made for your pleasure,  
pleasure.
- 2 Let all my movements express  
a heart that loves to say 'yes,'  
a will that leaps to obey you.  
Let all my energy blaze  
to see the joy in your face,  
let my whole being praise you,  
praise you.

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950) and Steve Thompson

### Hymn 728

- 1 O God, you search me and you know me.  
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.  
When I walk or lie down you are before me :  
ever the maker and keeper of my days.
- 2 You know my resting and my rising.  
You discern my purpose from afar,  
and with love everlasting you besiege me :  
in every moment of life or death, you are.
- 3 Before a word is on my tongue, Lord,  
you have known its meaning through and  
through.  
You are with me beyond my understanding :  
God of my present, my past and future, too.
- 4 Although your Spirit is upon me,  
still I search for shelter from your light.

There is nowhere on earth I can escape  
you :  
even the darkness is radiant in your sight.  
5 For you created me and shaped me,  
gave me life within my mother's womb.  
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you :  
safe in your hands, all creation is made new.

Bernadette Farrell (b. 1957)

based on psalm 139

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### Hymn 250

- 1 Jesus calls us ! O'er the tumult  
of our life's wild restless sea,  
day by day his voice is sounding,  
saying : 'Christian, follow me.'
- 2 As of old apostles heard it  
by the Galilean lake,  
turned from home and toil and kindred,  
leaving all for his dear sake.
- 3 Jesus calls us from the worship  
of the vain world's golden store,  
from each idol that would keep us,  
saying : 'Christian, love me more.'
- 4 In our joys and in our sorrows,  
days of toil and hours of ease,  
still he calls, in cares and pleasures :  
'Christian, love me more than these.'
- 5 Jesus calls us ! By your mercies,  
Saviour, may we hear your call,  
give our hearts to your obedience,  
serve and love you best of all.

Cecil Frances Alexander (1818–1895)

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