

worship notes



from the United Reformed Church

Sunday 9th June 2024
Proper 5 | Ordinary 10
The Revd Dr
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Call to Worship

Give thanks to the Lord, with your whole heart;
in face of all that is sing God's praise!

**We bow down towards God's temple
and give thanks to God's name –
for love, and for faithfulness;
for God's name, and for God's word of truth.**

For though the Lord is high,
God meets the lowly with a gaze of love;
but the haughty God can spot from far away.

**Though I face troubles and difficulties,
I am not overcome;
God stretches out a hand of help,
and God's own right hand delivers me.**

The Lord will accomplish God's purpose for you;
God's steadfast love, is here today and it endures forever.

Prayers of Approach and Confession

Spirit of God, at large in our world,
blowing where you will,
enlivening, strengthening, emboldening, comforting.
Ruach of God, we celebrate you,
you are the thirst and its quenching,
the source and goal of our deepest longing.
And it is you who reveals Jesus to us as Messiah and Lord.
Spirit of Pentecost, and of today,
true Spirit of our spirits,
be at work among us and in us.
Draw us close to Father and to Son,

and to each other.

Spirit of Truth,
crusher of lies,
undoer of falsehood,
dynamo of justice,
and strengthener of the powerless...
we do not always recognise you.
And sometimes when we know your prompting we turn away,
or distract ourselves,
or seek in another voice a reason to live and speak as we wish.
We tell ourselves that life is complex
when in reality it is simple,
and we tell ourselves it is simple
when it is not.
Forgive our disobedience,
wilful and lazy by turn,
build us up into those who will not grieve you,
but live increasingly in your life and power. Amen

Declaration of Forgiveness

It is God who forgives.
It is God who is on your side.
It is God who wills for you,
life and all that makes you strong
and makes you fully alive.
The power at work in creation,
and in Christ Jesus,
is at work in you,
completing your redemption.
Thanks be to God!

A Prayer for Illumination

Amidst all the clamour within and without,
the voices and pressures and claims upon us,
the darkneses that pretend to illumine,
and the true light of life that always prevails.
Help us, O God, to hear you speak,
to discern and to bind and to loose as we should, ourselves and others.
Make ancient words alive and useful
and turn us towards all is true. Amen.

Reading

St Mark 3:19b-35

Children's Activity

The focus for the activity is the last paragraph of the passage, where Jesus is recorded as saying "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." The idea behind this activity is simple. To introduce the idea of a family beyond the usual use of the word, and an appreciation of those who support us and love us. This slightly short-circuits a simple criterion of obedience and marries it to loving one another and giving support and friendship. But I think this is justified and legitimate. This can be done without simplistic use of the 'church family' metaphor and I encourage doing this.

"Family Tree"

Those taking part might be encouraged (helped and guided, if necessary) to draw a 'family tree' of their known biological relatives. This can be as simple or as complex as wished. It could be simply names, or pictures depending on the age and artistic skill of the participants (and/or the skills of the helpers).

"Extended Family Tree"

The second movement involves considering "what people who are important to me are left out of the first "family tree"?" Friends, teachers, family friends, godparents, maybe? Maybe half-siblings or cousins? This could be a time to be sensitive to, but also to celebrate, blended families!

As for the artwork, the second, augmented, family tree could be traced over or drafted alongside the original.

Preaching Notes

The Revised Common Lectionary begins this reading with verse 20: "and the crowd came together again..." Preachers may wish to begin a few words before with 19b "Then he went home" in order to situate the account at Jesus' home place. This is a passage with a number of entry points, any of which could provide a stimulating discussion. Among them the following: the Scribes accusation that Jesus acts in the power of Beelzebul; Jesus picture of a "house divided" and a strong man bound; the 'riddle' of the unforgiveable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit; or, the creation of a new community of kinship (based on being those who "do the will of God") that seems even to imply the rejection of Jesus' birth family. While all of these have merits, might they carry a danger – if not handled very skilfully - of elevating drama and hyperbole to a place where "Da Vinci Code religion" (Rubik Cube Theology?) becomes inevitable. By this I mean an approach that seeks to decipher in image in ways that go beyond Mark's intention or (more importantly?) that of

Jesus. Are there times to 'leave well alone' if we can't be sure of handling faithfully? In this instance, I felt moved to explore the dynamics of community and Jesus response/situation in each, in ways that I hope were sympathetic to Jesus human situation and to our lives too. Jesus supported (and opposed) by (i) his family, (ii) the wider community, the village and authorities beyond, and (iii) those the Master identified as his 'new family' (the 'church in embryo'?) Foregrounding community as a hermeneutical lens does result in other things falling out of focus, but may enable us to identify with Jesus in his humanity. It may also help us to 'land' somewhere useful: with a realistic appreciation of community and relationship as complicated complemented with a bolstered commitment to be a community of discipleship and support. The prayers and hymns attempt to bring in something of the Pentecost season with a foregrounding of the Holy Spirit's ministry and concluding on an eschatological note with "The battle Hymn of the Republic". The preacher putting together this service doesn't get the change to put in contextualising links and segues for hymns. But you can!

Offertory

God has not withheld any good gift from us,
even God's Son, Christ Jesus
and God's own life in the Spirit.
It is this Spirit that prompts us to response.
In whatever pattern and by whatever means –
at home, in church, in hospital or elsewhere –
we dedicate ourselves and a portion of our means
for the signposting of God's kingdom, through the fellowship of the Church.

Accept our gifts, O God,
and let what we have, and are, be used in your service. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

The Spirit is restless.
The Spirit prompts and enlivens.
The Spirit sustains those who struggle against darkness in all its forms.
We pray for those who are ill in mind or body,
and for those who care for them.
We pray for those who speak unwelcome truths
and are maligned, imprisoned, attacked and murdered.
We pray for our lives in community, may it bring life and wholeness,
healing and hope in place of control, suspicion and fear.
Let us be true family to each other,
abandoning what is counterfeit and incomplete.
We pray for ourselves, may we be attuned to the mind of Christ,
and find ourselves counted among his true family.
May each one achieve the measure of authentic personhood

they have been created for.

And for our world, where the kingdom story of hope that was in Christ Jesus is often assailed and obscured, misdirected and stunted, but is never overcome.

Let us be among those who have caught this kingdom vision.

And let those in whom this hope lives be stronger day by day and year by year than all that stands against.

Let the judgement of righteousness,

with peace and mercy,

fall upon all who do evil and wage wars of injustice.

Let powers and principalities and structures

that make the lives of a few comfortable at cost to the many,

let them be cast down.

Let truth march on... and on... and on... Amen.

Blessing

May God bless you in your homes, in your church and at school, at work and at rest, in recreation and service.

May Christ be at the centre of your gathering, in intimacy and ease, with challenge and purpose and comfort.

May the Spirit enliven and encourage you,

giving wisdom in all the decisions of life,

great and small, mundane and difficult,

so that you may be counted in the family of disciples.

And the blessing of God, be upon you and remain with you,

today and for every day to come. Amen

Hymn Suggestions				
	RS	CH4	StF	MP
At the dawning of creation	424			
Before the World Began		317	101	
Of the Father's Love Begotten	181	319	181	
For Everyone Born A Place at the Table		685		
Will You Let Me Be Your Servant	474	694	611	1261
Womb of life and source of being		118		
Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord		476		
Praise to the Lord for the joys of the earth		701		

RS – *Rejoice & Sing* | CH4 – *Church Hymnary 4* | StF – *Singing the Faith* | MP – *Mission Praise*

Another Idea...

Search online for Lord Jesus You Shall Be My Song as I Journey – a hymn well worth learning.