

A month of Sundays – July 2022



Worship

Preston Ribble Circuit

Ministry Team

Sunday 3rd July 2022

Peace to this house

Call to worship (Psalm 66)

Let us make a joyful noise,
singing glory to God,
offering glorious praise.
Let us say to our God:
'How awesome are your deeds.
Holy is your name.'

Opening prayer

Holy, holy, holy Lord,
we rejoice in all that you have done.
We gather to praise you
and to reflect on how we can play our part in your work.
Holy, holy, holy Lord, be with us now –
inspire us, enrich our worship and encourage our mission,
in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Bible Reading: Luke 10.1-11,16-20

This is Luke's second account of Jesus' sending out 70 disciples to extend his ministry of teaching and healing. The 70 anticipate the coming of Jesus (v.1). Their vulnerability means they must rely on receiving as well as giving God's blessing, hence the importance of prayer and hospitality. They are to travel light, with a sense of urgency (v.4). They are armed only with the message of 'Peace to this house' (v.5), a traditional greeting, rich in its assurance of God's victory and restoration. Like Jesus, they are both welcomed and rejected, and bring both healing and division.

Hymn – Make me a channel StF 707

- 1 Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love;
where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;
and where there's doubt, true faith in you:
*O Master, grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.*
- 2 Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope;
where there is darkness, only light;
and where there's sadness, ever joy:
Refrain
- 3 Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
in giving unto all that we receive,
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Sebastian Temple (1928–1997) from the *Prayer of St Francis*

Reflection

It's hard to remember when and where we learned to say 'Bless you' when somebody sneezes. It's an automatic reflex reaction for many of us, and I don't suppose most people think either of God or what 'bless' means when they say it. In fact, some people even feel it's rude not to say 'bless you' – whether they believe in God or not. It's just what you do when someone sneezes. But is that all a blessing is? Is it just an utterance without specific meaning?

In the same way, most acts of worship end with a blessing of some kind. Is that just a liturgical full stop, words spoken but without any significant impact or meaning?

Jesus told the 70 that whenever they entered a house the first thing they should say was, 'Peace to this house.' Are these

empty words? Is this just a fancy way of saying ‘Hi folks’? Clearly it is not, because Jesus goes on to say (Luke 10.6): ‘And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you.’ Jesus describes peace as a unifying facet of our lives. It is as if we each have a portion of peace that we can offer. But this peace can never just hang about in the air. It is either received – and thus enriches the heart of the recipient – or it bounces back to the one who is offering it. God’s Spirit works to enhance the relationship between the one who offers and the one who accepts.

If you ever have been in a situation of offering to shake a person’s hand and been rejected, you will know that it is an unpleasant and awkward situation to be in. However, in the end you will be at peace with yourself because you stretched out the hand of friendship. You did the right thing even though that which you offered has bounced back, as it were, into your stock.

Back to sneezing... It is thought that the practice dates back to a time when people believed that a sneeze somehow loosened your soul from the rest of you. It might even have escaped along with the ‘atchoo’. But, by saying ‘bless you’, the soul was restored to its rightful place and the devil was prevented from snatching it away. It’s doubtful that many people would believe that explanation today, whether they believe in God or not, but the idea of blessing someone in response to something physical is interesting. It demonstrates that a blessing is an act of love; it reveals a desire for the other person to be protected, and it is motivated by a hope that they will remain whole. May God bless you. Amen.

Lord’s Prayer

Blessing

Where there is conflict,

let there be peace.

Where there is fearfulness,

let there be peace.

Where there is anger,

let there be peace.

Where there is violence,

let there be peace.

May God's peace rest on our homes

and all who live in them.

Amen.

Sunday 10th July 2022

A gathering prayer

Lord, awaken us this morning to the needs of your world,
the pains and tensions in our communities,
the dangers and hardships in the most vulnerable areas
of this warming planet.

Show us the importance of love
in all the difficult choices and decisions
we are called upon to make, big or small.

Amen.

Bible Reading – Luke 10.25-37

In response to a question by a lawyer – Who is my neighbour?
– Jesus tells a parable about a man who needs help. Of those
who had the opportunity, only a Samaritan did so; and
Samaritans and Jews disliked each other intensely. By his

actions, the man showed that he was not only a good Samaritan but a good neighbour. Jesus says to the lawyer, 'Go and do likewise.'

We often think of this story in terms of the men who didn't 'do the right thing' and one, the Samaritan, who did. But the overall story starts with the lawyer who asked for a deeper understanding of 'doing the right thing', and Jesus' parable and its challenge to his assumptions is the answer. The story can help us to re-examine our assumptions and responses too.

Hymn – When I needed a neighbour Stf 256

- 1 When I needed a neighbour, were you there, were you there?
When I needed a neighbour, were you there?
*And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter,
were you there?*
- 2 I was hungry and thirsty, were you there, were you there?
I was hungry and thirsty, were you there?
- 3 I was cold, I was naked, were you there, were you there?
I was cold, I was naked, were you there?
- 4 When I needed a shelter, were you there, were you there?
When I needed a shelter, were you there?
- 5 When I needed a healer, were you there, were you there?
When I needed a healer, were you there?
- 6 Wherever you travel I'll be there, I'll be there,
wherever you travel I'll be there.
*And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter,
I'll be there.*

Sydney Carter (1915–2004) .

A prayer of thanksgiving

Almighty God, in a world of so many choices,
with so many options,

so many routes to take and roads to follow,
we give you thanks that in all the mix of life you are there,
you are here with us and always will be.

We give you thanks that you have inspired so many people
to live their lives with love and support and generosity.

We give you thanks that you have set hearts on fire
with passion and commitment to serve you and our neighbours
in the way you would have us do.

We give thanks that we can read and share your word,
know your truth, feel your peace

and have the freedom to choose right from wrong.

For all this and so much more, we give you thanks and praise.

Amen.

Reflection

If we were asked to give examples of neighbourliness, we would probably all be able to do so without much trouble. Perhaps our minds will go back to the pandemic, when there were so many stories of people shopping for strangers who were self-isolating, or posties taking the time to ask, 'Everything OK?' as they handed over the latest online order. Or perhaps we have stories of how generous the community has been to the local foodbank, or the appeal for the homeless shelter. Or whatever it is.

But do we ever ask ourselves about our motives for doing – or not doing – something? In Jesus' parable, the priest and the Levite were both good men. They knew the law, and they knew that godly men kept it! That is how you build and reinforce a godly community – even though it sometimes meant drawing a rather hard line around the community. So, they did not help the man who had been attacked, who needed help – the man

who was different, who looked different, was of a different religion, a different culture.

'We don't do that today!' If you're not saying that, you may be thinking it. Off the top of your head you probably can't think of any reason why a good, socially conscious Christian would not feel obliged to help an injured and dying man. We can't imagine ourselves being as rule-bound, as apparently uncaring to the injured man, as those two good Jewish men were. We can't imagine ourselves being put off because a person in desperate need is from another culture, or another religion, or looks different, speaks with a different accent or language. Or would we...?

The question that the lawyer asked Jesus was: Who is my neighbour? Jesus' answer was to ask: Who showed neighbourliness? Go and do likewise. Our challenge is not to know who our neighbours are so we can help them. It is to ask ourselves if we are being good neighbours, showing God's mercy to anyone and everyone who needs it.

A sending out prayer

Lord, help us to look for the good in our neighbours.
Help us to recognise that neighbourliness goes two ways.
Make us gracious as well as generous,
receptive to the ideas and perspectives,
as well as the needs, of others,
remembering that as we meet them, we meet you.

Amen.

Sunday 17th July 2022

Call to worship

Listen to the words of Jesus Christ!
Seize the moment with both hands!
Let us come together to listen and to learn,
as we seek to be his servants.

Opening Prayers

Lord Jesus Christ, we come to you,
burdened by our insecurities and responsibilities.
Sometimes we are not valued for what we are,
but for what other people want to make us.
But we know you love us for what and who we are,
and this sets us free to be our fullest selves,
disciples, following your way, and learning from you.
May we listen and learn together today.
Amen.

Bible readings - Luke 10.38-42

Jesus visits the home of Martha and her sister Mary. Mary finds time to sit and listen to Jesus, but Martha is too busy with her chores. Martha grumbles about the lack of help from her sister, but Jesus suggests that, right now, listening to what he has to say is the most important thing to be done.

The story of Mary and Martha has sometimes been used to enrol Jesus on the side of those working for the emancipation of women from domestic roles, or by those who see domestic hospitality as a lesser form of discipleship or mission. But is either of these really the point? How should we respond to Jesus?

Hymn – All I once held dear, StF 489

1 All I once held dear,
built my life upon,
all this world reveres,
and wars to own,
all I once thought gain
I have counted loss;
spent and worthless now,
compared to this.
*Knowing you, Jesus,
knowing you,
there is no greater thing.
You're my all, you're the best,
you're my joy, my righteousness,
and I love you, Lord.*

2 Now my heart's desire
is to know you more,
to be found in you
and known as yours.
To possess by faith
what I could not earn,
all-surpassing gift
of righteousness.

3 Oh, to know the power
of your risen life,
and to know you in
your sufferings.
To become like you
in your death, my Lord,
so with you to live
and never die.

Graham Kendrick (*b.* 1950)

Reflection

Are you good at seizing the moment? It requires a mixture of discernment and decisiveness. We're not going to fall into committed discipleship by chance. It would have been so easy for Mary to do what she always did when visitors arrived. If Martha cooked, probably she laid the table. That's how it generally works, isn't it? Or perhaps Mary arranged the flowers. She may have known that Martha would be cross if she didn't supply her usual help with the bits Martha found difficult or a nuisance. She needed courage. And it looks as if she had good concentration as well. She sat at Jesus feet 'and listened'. She wasn't shirking, pretending to want to learn or pretending to give Jesus the respectful attention due to an honoured guest. She wasn't playing for effect either, looking over her shoulder to test the reaction she was getting. She was single-minded.

Do you admire her, or find her a bit unattractive? Single-minded people can be a bit off-putting, or a bit irritating! Have you ever had a friend who was impossible to lure out for a drink, or to a film, because he or she was working for an exam, or needing to get on with the end-of-year figures – or something like that? Maybe when it comes to finding the opportunities to 'listen for God' we all need to be a bit less concerned about how other people see us. Maybe, sometimes, we need to be irritating! Not 'just because', but because we've thought about it, and we're confident that we've seized an opportunity too important to let pass by.

Prayers of Intercession

Lord Jesus, you see all that goes on
within the created world you hold.

Hear our prayers for the needs we see.

We lift up to you:

the alienated...

the hostile...

the confused...

those desiring to belong and be accepted...

the persecuted...

and those we know personally who have yet to accept you as Lord of their lives.

**Lord Jesus Christ, you are the one
who can make whole the broken of this world.
We trust our prayers into your hands.
Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Blessing

Lord, send us out into the world,
alert to whatever nudges us to hear you calling,
or whatever points us in your way.
Make us bold to resist those who would keep us
in the comfortable well-trodden paths,
so that – like Mary – we can break free from time to time,
to sit at your feet.

Amen.

Sunday 24th July 2021

A gathering prayer

Almighty God, as we gather,
let us be quiet and find your presence.
We rejoice in the mystery of your loving justice.
Help us to understand what your love means,
and how we can share that love with others.
In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Hymn – Dear Lord and Father of mankind

Stf 495

- 1 Dear Lord and Father of mankind
forgive our foolish ways ;
re clothe us in our rightful mind ;
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence, praise.
- 2 In simple trust like theirs who heard
beside the Syrian sea
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word
rise up and follow thee.
- 3 O sabbath rest by Galilee !
O calm of hills above,
where Jesus knelt to share with thee
the silence of eternity,
interpreted by love !
- 4 With that deep hush subduing all
our words and works that drown
the tender whisper of thy call,
as noiseless let thy blessing fall
as fell thy manna down.
- 5 Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease ;
take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace.
- 6 Breathe through the heats of our desire
thy coolness and thy balm ;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire ;
speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still small voice of calm !

John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892)

The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Luke 11.1-13

Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray using the words that we call 'The Lord's Prayer'. Then he encourages them to persevere in prayer, in all circumstances, trusting that God will provide what is needed – and, in particular, will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask.

Reflection

What picture does 'daily bread' conjure up for you? Possibly a white-sliced or a small crusty granary loaf? If you were in France, it might be a long French 'baton', a croissant or a brioche that would spring to mind. And in the Middle East, a pitta or a flat bread, perhaps. All quite different. So, the basics are different, as fits their contexts. So is the practice. Some French people take their breakfast rolls standing at a counter in a bar. In the Middle East they often recline or sit cross-legged around a low table to eat dinner. Many of us are used to sitting at some sort of table to eat. Others will sit in the lounge, gathered around a telly. But what is common to most of these (there are always exceptions!), is taking at least part of your daily bread in company, with chat and camaraderie.

Foodbanks know that just dishing out bags of groceries is not enough. They need to provide a welcome, an opportunity for chat, a chance for someone in food poverty to recover their dignity, and their sense of agency. So, they provide, if possible, some element of choice, even if it's only a white or brown. Receiving can be difficult. That may be why, in the Lord's Prayer, remembering that our daily bread is God's gift to everyone, not our possession to hold or withhold, is followed by remembering our need for forgiveness, and our need to offer it

– even to those who may not reciprocate. Grace and graciousness must not be conditional. Gifts given insensitively, without love and care, may be as insulting and hurtful to the recipients as a snake or a scorpion given to a child instead of food. In short, we need God’s gift of the Holy Spirit to make us gracious in giving.

The kingdom comes only when we remember that the greater the vulnerability of the person we seek to help, the greater is our need for humility before them.

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is in our hearts as we worship our God.

For freedom to pray: **thanks be to God.**

For lessons taught: **thanks be to God.**

For gifts given: **thanks be to God.**

For care offered: **thanks be to God.**

For love flowing: **thanks be to God.**

For life in its fullness: **thanks be to God.**

For the Word made flesh, dwelling among us: **thanks be to God.**

For the Holy Spirit, inspiring and moving us: **thanks be to God.**

For the promises of God lived out between us: **thanks be to God.**

For sustenance for body, mind and soul: **thanks be to God.**

For bread for the day: **thanks be to God.**

For the promise of God’s kingdom: **thanks be to God.**

For life everlasting: **thanks be to God.**

Thanksgiving is in our hearts, as we worship our God and live out our lives, day by day.

Amen.

A sending out prayer

Lord, help us to think before praying,
and pray before acting.

May we see our community
and the people who make it up
as precious to you and precious to us,
as we seek to preserve all that is beautiful
and build up all that is holy and Godly.

Amen.

Sunday 31st July 2022

Call to worship

Let us worship the God of plenty,
who clothes the woods with green leaves,
the fields with crops and the meadows with flowers,
and sends sun to warm and rain to refresh.

Hymn – Morning has broken StF 136

- 1 Morning has broken
like the first morning;
blackbird has spoken
like the first bird.
Praise for the singing!
Praise for the morning!
Praise for them, springing
fresh from the Word!
- 2 Sweet the rain's new fall
sunlit from heaven,
like the first dewfall
on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness

of the wet garden,
sprung in completeness
where his feet pass.

3 Mine is the sunlight!
Mine is the morning
born of the one light
Eden saw play!
Praise with elation,
praise every morning,
God's re-creation
of the new day!

Eleanor Farjeon (1881–1965)

Reading: Luke 12.13-21

Someone asked Jesus to intervene in a family row over money. Jesus declined, and instead told a parable about a rich man who constantly sought to build up his wealth and possessions, with the aim of living a good and long retirement; but he didn't live long enough for this to happen. So, what was the point? Far better, Jesus says, to build up treasure in heaven and to be 'rich towards God'.

Reflection

Is there some deeper sin beneath the apparent ungodliness of hoarding wealth? As we see – first from Ecclesiastes, and then from Luke – accumulating stuff doesn't make a person happy. But is this the whole story?

The pandemic saw, at first, a most impressive drive to devise, test, evaluate and license a whole range of vaccines against Covid-19. But then hoarding set in. Sometimes, as when the UK secured the promise of enough vaccine to vaccinate its population several times over, it was called prudence. Later it was vaccine nationalism. Some people insisted that the nation devising the vaccine should get first access to it, regardless of

need. Others sought to disparage a vaccine they hadn't produced or procured in sufficient supply, regardless of the consequences of thereby encouraging vaccine hesitancy.

What lay behind this rather shocking display of school-playground mentality? 'It's my ball and he's not playing with it!' 'It's a rotten ball and I wouldn't play with you even if you let me!'

Covid vaccines proved a kind of possession that illustrated all too clearly how our possessions, even good and useful ones, can come to be seen as our only protection against a hostile and dangerous world – or our leverage against opponents. We become possessive and defensive, trusting that what we own will protect us from other people, never mind from impending emergencies or unseen dangers. So, richness in stuff really does seem to militate strongly against trust in God. Stuff can mask our real need, and leave no room for faith to squeeze in.

Stuff perpetuates and builds fear of loss; and that inhibits hope, as well as love, compassion and generosity. But it's very hard to shake off our trust in stuff completely. Perhaps we should at the very least wind it down a bit.

Hymn – O Jesus I have promised StF 563

- 1 O Jesus, I have promised
to serve you to the end;
Lord, be for ever near me,
my master and my friend;
I shall not fear the battle
if you are by my side,
nor wander from the pathway
if you will be my guide.
- 2 O let me feel you near me;
the world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle,
the tempting sounds I hear;

my foes are ever near me,
around me, and within ;
but, Jesus, now draw nearer,
and shield my soul from sin.

3 O let me hear you speaking
in accents clear and still,
above the storms of passion,
the murmurs of self-will ;
O speak to reassure me,
to hasten or control ;
Lord, speak, and make me listen,
O guardian of my soul.

4 O Jesus, you have promised
to all who follow you,
that where you are in glory
your servant shall be too ;
and, Jesus, I have promised
to serve you to the end ;
O give me grace to follow
my master and my friend.

John Ernest Bode (1816–1874)

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Prayers of intercession

‘Looking out for number one’ is rife in the way of the world,
Lord.

We pray for all who work for selfish gain to the detriment of
others.

Help them – and us – to see that working purely for personal
pride and satisfaction is futile, and that serving you leads to
everlasting joy.

We pray for the lives of those who are neglected – speak into
their lives, Lord.

Help them – and us – become aware of the relationship with

you that can transform lives.

We pray too for all who seek wisdom in purely human sources.

May they – and we – understand that true wisdom and happiness can be found only in you.

We pray for all those caught up in webs of lies and deceit, the unethical and immoral.

Break down the barriers preventing them – and us – from seeing the errors of their, and our, ways.

We bring these prayers before you in, and through, your glorious name.

Amen.

A sending out prayer

Loving God, you have given us eyes to see

the beauty and bounty of the earth,

and minds to understand the importance of sharing.

As we go from this place, make us quick to see

where there is injustice or suffering,

and generous to do what we can to alleviate either.

Amen.