

# A month of Sundays – June 2022



Preston Ribble Circuit

Ministry Team

# Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2022

## Call to worship

Whoever you are, come together and come to God.  
Wherever you're from, come together and come to God.  
Whatever you bring, come together and come to God.  
However you feel, come together and come to God.  
God is here, and God is good!

## A prayer of adoration

God of wonder, how marvellous you are.  
We have an awesome God.  
All creation looks to you to provide and satisfy every need.  
You amaze us with your sustaining breath,  
your wisdom and wonderful generosity.  
God of wonder, how marvellous you are.  
We have an awesome God.  
From glory you lovingly gave your Son Jesus Christ  
to come among us and to die on the cross for us  
before taking him back to sit at your right hand.  
God of wonder, how marvellous you are.  
We have an awesome God.  
With mighty power you poured out your Holy Spirit at Pentecost  
on all people, all ages, all nations;  
igniting the life of your church with wind and fire.  
God of wonder, how marvellous you are.  
We have an awesome God. Amen.

## A prayer of confession

Lord, forgive us the days we don't feel like rejoicing and when  
we find peace evading us. We are sorry when we fail to live as  
Spirit-filled children of God. Negative emotions have a habit of

infiltrating. We find ourselves fearing situations we can't control, doubting what we can't see or understand. Others may share of what you have done in their lives and sometimes we find ourselves being sceptical instead of accepting, believing and rejoicing in your wonders.

Lord God, forgive us.

Help us to live more Spirit-filled lives. Amen.

## **Assurance of forgiveness**

God sent his Son to shed his blood as payment for our sins.

God sent his Holy Spirit to live with us and in us.

Be at peace. For Jesus is faithful and just. Our sins are forgiven.

We praise you, Father God.

We thank you, Jesus.

Holy Spirit, come fill us afresh. Amen.

**Reading:** Acts 2.1-21

## **Reflection:**

If you've seen the film *Love Actually*, you'll probably remember the scene where Colin Firth, playing an English author, is in Portugal to write his latest book. He's sitting outside at a table overlooking a beautiful lake, working on an ancient typewriter. The finished pages are piling up around him, weighed down by empty mugs. The lovely young Portuguese woman who comes daily to do some housekeeping arrives to clear the empty mugs – and dozens of pages of original manuscript are blown away into the lake. (Things do turn out okay in the end!)

Letting the Holy Spirit loose in our lives might be a bit like that. But first we'd probably want to do a risk assessment – as

perhaps those ‘devout Jews’ did on that particular Day of Pentecost. For them, Pentecost was a celebration of the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai, but the events they witnessed and the message they heard from Peter that day told a different story. It wasn’t about the Law but about the Prophets – in this case Joel – and about the beginning of ‘the last days’: it wasn’t about God’s work in the past, but about God’s work in the present, pointing to the future fulfilment of all things. Would they continue to sneer (‘They are filled with new wine!’) or would they ‘call on the name of the Lord and be saved’?

We too have a choice. Will we celebrate Pentecost simply as a reminder of God’s work in the past, or dare we respond to Peter’s message as an invitation for us today? What if we did set aside time to be alone with God, to ask him to set us on fire with his love? What if our church family set time aside to be together with God, asking him to blow through us with his power?

‘What if...?’ is a great question to ask in prayer. Not only can it open our eyes to God’s possibilities and purposes for us, it also helps us to notice what’s holding us back. It’s often helpful to write down, or to draw, what comes to us as we dare to open our hearts and minds to God in this way: where are the ‘fire doors’ and the ‘draught excluders’ in our lives, both personally and as a church? And what would it mean to dismantle them?

The transformation of Jesus’ disciples on that particular Day of Pentecost signified the offer of transformation for all people, as Joel had prophesied. And as all creation inches towards its final fulfilment, with ‘the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day’, we are invited both to be transformed ourselves and to be agents of transformation for others. This is God’s great purpose for us: our ‘fullest fulfilment’ involves saying ‘Yes’ to the love and the power of his Holy Spirit.

## **Prayers of intercession**

We pray, Holy Spirit, for all who lack confidence.  
For parents struggling to meet the needs of their families...  
Holy Spirit, affirm them today.  
For children struggling with their work at school...  
For teachers struggling to meet the demands of the day...  
For young people who feel misunderstood...  
For young adults struggling to find their place in the world...  
For carers trying to support and comfort those who are  
vulnerable...  
For the frail, facing diminishing strength and loss of identity...  
For all people struggling to be who they truly are...  
Holy Spirit affirm them – and us – today.  
**Amen.**

## **Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

I do not fear this day, for you are with me  
wherever I might go, your light to shine ahead,  
your footsteps to lead the way.  
I do not fear this day, for your word will be my guide,  
your strength will sustain me, your love revives me,  
this day and all days.  
I do not fear this day, for you are with me.

### **Opening Prayers**

Yours, Lord is the Glory,  
in everything I see,  
a country scene,  
mountain stream,  
sunrise, sunset, rain and snow.

Yours, Lord is the Glory,  
wherever I might go.

Yours, Lord is the Glory,  
in everything I hear,  
a roaring sea,  
bumblebee,  
laughter, loving, a tender poem.  
Yours, Lord is the Glory,  
wherever I might go.

Yours, Lord is the Glory,  
in everything I feel,  
a special place,  
warm embrace,  
accepted, helped to become whole.

Lord God, you have shown us such love,  
and stretched out your arms  
to draw us into your embrace.  
Yet we so often fail to show that love  
within our lives,  
or recognise its source.  
Forgive our short-sightedness,  
for the times we've failed to see your love  
in the generosity of friend  
or stranger,  
the shoulder to cry on,  
willing ear to listen,  
a word of encouragement,  
holding our hand that extra mile.  
Forgive us for failing to notice  
how much you care for us.

## Hymn 443 STF Come Let Us Sing

1. Come let us sing of a wonderful love,  
Tender and true;  
Out of the heart of the Father above,  
Streaming to me and to you:  
Wonderful love  
Dwells in the heart of the Father above.

2. Jesus, the Saviour, this gospel to tell,  
Joyfully came;  
Came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,  
Sharing their sorrow and shame;  
Seeking the lost,  
Saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

3. Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;  
Why do they roam?  
Love only waits to forgive and forget;  
Home! weary wanderer, home!  
Wonderful love  
Dwells in the heart of the Father above.

4. Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love,  
Come and abide,  
Lifting my life till it rises above  
Envy and falsehood and pride:  
Seeking to be  
Lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

*Lyrics by Robert Walmsley (1831 – 1905).*

### **Reflection** Denise Johnson

This day is the eve of a very special day for me. On the 13<sup>th</sup> June 2022 I will be celebrating with my husband thirty years of marriage. On a hot sunny day, at the Wesley Memorial Church

in Epworth we began a journey, and we still walk on that journey together. It's funny what sticks in your mind when you look back – the sunshine, seeing all our family and friends, riding to church on a horse and cart, Nick's face as I walked in – saying those vows. We also look back through the photographs and acknowledge those of our family who are no longer with us but who enjoyed that special moment alongside us.

Loss is a part of life and I spend many of my working hours alongside people who have or who are experiencing loss. There is a very real sense of being connected with something bigger in those moments. For me, this is God. Although loss is cruel and unjustified at times it is a privilege to try and bring a sense of peace to those in deep need. Sometimes I will sit in long moments of silence with someone, sometimes I will listen, sometimes I will just be there for support. I am sure that you have been there for someone and have some sense of this bigger thing, this God, this peace – it is just there.

I hope that as you travel on in life you feel and experience the peace which passes understanding and that you have someone by your side in the difficult moments.

## **Reading** Philippians 4 v4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

## **Closing Prayer**

May God the provider  
of green pastures  
and quiet waters  
be the peace in our hearts today  
May Jesus our guide  
on mountain top  
and valley deep  
be the hope in our hearts today  
May the Spirit of truth  
and knowledge  
comforter and friend  
be the strength in our hearts today  
Amen

## **Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

Children of God,  
give praise to our God who loves you.  
All who are broken and bruised,  
glorify our God who will grant you peace.  
All who are healed and restored,  
stand in awe of our God who has and will transform your life.  
Come now and worship.

### **A prayer of adoration**

Almighty, powerful God,  
who is full of compassion,  
who rescues us from danger,  
who strengthens the weak,  
who feeds the poor:  
we bow down and honour your name.

Almighty, powerful God,  
who brings hope and healing,  
who hears our cry,  
whose heart feels our pain,  
who heals us inside and out:  
we bow down and honour your name.  
Amen.

## **A prayer of confession**

Lord, how the world needs your healing. We think of the blight of plastic polluting our rivers and oceans, or the distress of creatures on the verge of extinction, the scars of climate change and the sufferings inflicted by conflict. Forgive us if we unwittingly play any part in these things. Show us what we can do to help bring change in the world.

Lord, there are so many forms of pain and suffering. How we need your healing hand. Forgive us: when the pull of social media is so great that we stray into wrong territory; for pain we inflict by choosing to follow our own paths and schemes; or when we think ourselves to be better than others or allow differences to separate us. Your healing hands are always open. Forgive us when we ignore them, whether through fear, ignorance or self-will.

## **Assurance of forgiveness**

There is so much sin and pain in our broken world.  
But when we journey with Jesus,  
we find forgiveness and healing.  
We are all one in Christ Jesus,  
who has forgiven our sins  
and leads us into eternity with him.  
Amen.

## **Reading:** Isaiah 19:16 to 25

The chapter concerns Egypt and begins with an Oracle against the nation which has enslaved Israel. In verse 18 there is a sudden change of tone. Five cities of Egypt give allegiance to Yahweh. The vision of Israel's salvation is in Egypt.

A highway is set up between Assyria and Egypt and worship of the lord happened in both great nations. Nations that had historically been opposed to God and oppressed God's people.

God is shown to be at work even where there is great opposition and hatred.

Even in the darkest places the radiant light of God shines and not only shines but changes things.

The Apostle Paul reminds us in a vision of all people being drawn into the embrace of the family of God and for us we need to remember that although we are part of the family of God we are only in by the mercy of God. The grace of God is for all people every nation, of every type, of every sexuality, of every colour, in every part of God's world and we are challenged to understand that it is God's light that we shine not ours.

Isaiah returns to this theme later in the book at Isaiah 60 where the writer says arise shine for your light has come on the glory of the laws is written upon you and nations shall come to the light

This is reflected in the hymn by Graham Kendrick

1 Darkness like a shroud covers the earth.  
Evil like a cloud covers the people.  
But the Lord will rise upon you  
and his glory will appear on you,  
nations will come to your light.

*Arise, shine, your light has come,  
the glory of the Lord has risen on you!  
Arise, shine, your light has come,  
Jesus the Light of the world has come.*

- 2 Children of the light, be clean and pure.  
Rise, you sleepers, Christ will shine on you.  
Take the Spirit's flashing two-edged sword  
and with faith declare God's mighty word;  
stand up and in his strength be strong.
- 3 Here among us now, Christ the Light  
kindles brighter flames in our trembling hearts.  
Living Word, our lamp, come guide our feet  
as we walk as one in light and peace  
till justice and truth shine like the sun.
- 4 Like a city bright so let us blaze;  
lights in every street turning night to day.  
And the darkness shall not overcome  
till the fullness of Christ's kingdom comes,  
dawning to God's eternal day.

*Arise, shine, your light has come,  
the glory of the Lord has risen on you!  
Arise, shine, your light has come,  
Jesus the Light of the world,  
Jesus the Light of the world,  
Jesus the Light of the world has come.*

## **Prayers of intercession**

We pray, dear God, for all who have lost their way and become strangers to themselves and to others...

Clothe them with reassurance.

We pray for those who have become estranged from their families and their communities...

Clothe them with reconciliation.

We pray for those who have lost heart in their faith and given up on the Church...

Clothe them with refreshment.

We pray for those who are vulnerable through illness, through poverty, through the aggression of others...

Clothe them with protection.

We pray for all people and all creation struggling to survive, struggling to find harmony, struggling to find hope...

Clothe them and us and all your world with peace.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

### **A sending out prayer**

Come with us, Lord, in our brokenness and bring healing.

Come with us, Lord, into our divided world and unite us.

Come with us, Lord, and cast from us that which is not of you, that we may live as your children in your world, today and always. Amen.

## **Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

### **Call to worship**

Children of God,

give praise to our God who loves you.

All who are broken and bruised,

glorify our God who will grant you peace.

All who are healed and restored,

stand in awe of our God who has and will transform your life.

Come now and worship.

## **Opening Prayer**

Let us praise the Lord.

Seek and be satisfied.

Proclaim his name for he will never fail us.

Let our hearts honour and worship him. **Amen.**

## **Bible reading** Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12

### **Reflection Isaiah - Faithful Servant** (material from Helen Paynter)

Of all the prophets, Isaiah is probably the one who speaks most about the Anointed One (Messiah) that God would send. But he does it in a variety of ways and we need to be alert to the devices he uses. In Isaiah 7, for instance, the prophet has a conversation with Ahaz, king of Judah. Ahaz's lack of faith in God is leading him to seek military assistance from Assyria – a dance with the devil, if ever there was one! In response, Isaiah offers him the sign of a young woman who would name her child 'God-with-us' (Emmanuel). In the first instance, this has to relate to a child born during Ahaz's lifetime; essentially, the baby was a sign to the king that God would save his people. This is why Matthew quotes it in his gospel, because he sees even more clearly than Isaiah how much the world needs God to step in and save it. And the birth he is describing is of the baby, the sign that God will definitively save the people.

Messianic prophecy in the Old Testament is like a river. Early on in the Bible there are tiny rivulets; whispered clues about what God is planning. Over time, those rivulets become streams. Sometimes these are visible, loudly demanding our attention. At other times they disappear underground and we

may think they have vanished. But they haven't, and one by one they re-emerge, combine and rush like a great river towards Jesus Christ. Many of these streams run through the book of Isaiah. Each one gives a glimpse of one of the ways that God operates, one of the patterns he is setting up. And when they converge they build a fuller picture.

Another stream was the suffering of the faithful servant of God. Most of the time, the biblical writers tend to associate obedience with flourishing. See Deuteronomy 28:1-14, or Psalm 1, for example. But there is a quiet, gentle trickle showing the opposite. See Psalm 73:12-13, or the book of Job. In that stream becomes a flood. In the reading today, the faithful servant of God, entirely innocent (53:9) suffers oppression and affliction (52:14; 53:7), is despised by other people (53:2-3) and apparently smitten by God (53:4,10), and ultimately dies (53:8). But the prophet pushes this daring idea even further than the psalmist and Job. Because there is something about this faithful servant's death that benefits others; somehow, others are healed by his affliction (v.5-8). The river roars on into the New Testament, where this passage is quoted frequently by gospel writers. Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory, so that we too, could enter into a relationship with God and ultimately see Christ face to face? Will you continue to be a faithful servant and witness to this amazing gift of love given freely to all?

## **Prayers**

We pray, dear God, for all who have lost their way and become strangers to themselves and to others...

### **Clothe them with reassurance.**

We pray for those who have become estranged from their families and their communities...

### **Clothe them with reconciliation.**

We pray for those who have lost heart in their faith and given

up on the Church...

**Clothe them with refreshment.**

We pray for those who are vulnerable through illness, through poverty, through the aggression of others...

**Clothe them with protection.**

We pray for all people and all creation struggling to survive, struggling to find harmony, struggling to find hope...

**Clothe them and us and all your world with peace.**

In Jesus' name. **Amen.** *Now say The Lord's Prayer*

## **Blessing**

Come with us, Lord, in our brokenness and bring healing.

Come with us, Lord, into our divided world and unite us.

Come with us, Lord, and cast from us that which is not of you, that we may live as your children in your world,

today and always. And now may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son & Holy Spirit be with us all. **Amen.**