

A month of Sundays
– May 2022

PRAISE

Preston Ribble Circuit

Ministry Team

Sunday 1st May 2022

Come, let us enter the presence
of the One who sits on the heavenly throne.
Let us join with every creature in heaven and earth,
and add our voices to the choir of angels,
worshipping and praising our Creator,
the One Most Holy.

Amen.

A prayer of confession and an assurance of forgiveness

Lord of life,
we come to you now and sit in the warmth of your love,
just as the disciples sat with you by the fire on the shore.
We say sorry, Lord, for all the times we've knowingly done
wrong.
We say sorry for all the times we've failed to recognise you or
your hand on us.
We come now and lay before you all that we are sorry for.

All powerful, all-seeing, all-knowing Creator,
we offer up these prayers seeking forgiveness and restoration.
be assured that past wrongs are burnt
on the coals of his love – forgiven and forgotten.
Glory be to God.
Amen.

Hymn: StF 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)

Reading: John 21.1-19

Jesus and the Miraculous Catch of Fish

¹Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: ²Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³"I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

4Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

5He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?”

“No,” they answered.

6He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

7Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. 8The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. 9When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

10Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” 11So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. 12Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. 13Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Jesus Reinstates Peter

15When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

16Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

17The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. 18Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” 19Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

Reflection:

John Timpson owns the shoe repair chain that bears his name. He and his wife have fostered some 90 children, and his business has recruited 270 former prisoners as employees. In a BBC Radio 4 Lent 2021 talk, Faith in ‘Lost Causes’, he spoke about the difference between passive optimism – thinking things might get better – and active hope: making them better. Understanding the insecurities that make people behave badly, and having faith in their potential and hope for their future is, he said, transformative. He spoke of trust, support, and love. And Jesus, understanding their fears and failures and offering them hospitality once more, trusts his ‘little children’, the disciples he loves, with his ministry of supporting his flock.

The impulsive Peter puts on his clothes to plunge into the water and be the first to swim to Jesus at the beach. We might think about this theologically: like foolish Adam he is strangely

ashamed of his nakedness and wanting to look better than the others, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree' (Genesis 3.12). Jesus renews Peter in his new creation, but perhaps Jesus also smiled at Peter's childishness. God's way with Israel was like a parent's with a toddler (Hosea 11.3-4). We can take pleasure in our children's first faltering steps, and Jesus loves his 'little children'.

We live in a world where if things are broken we usually throw them away. The Bible however is full of the message that nothing is wasted and that everyone can be part of the kingdom and used for the purposes of God. Kintsugi is the ancient Japanese art of mending pots with seams of gold. The meaning of kintsugi is 'golden joinery', and instead of seeking to hide the cracks and lines it makes a feature of them. You can read about the network that aims to create kintsugi hope groups in communities and churches. Knowing our own brokenness is a step towards God's healing in us and we worship a wounded healer. As the great gathering sing in today's reading from Revelation: 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered.'

Should God's work in us be invisible? Or is it important that we show our scars as signs of God at work?

Prayers of intercession

Loving God,
we pray for those who carry the burden of guilt,
and all who bear the weight of failure...
May Jesus turn their lives around.

We pray for all who are afraid of their past,
and all who are fearful of their future...
May Jesus turn their lives around.

We pray for those desperate for forgiveness,
and determined to begin again...

May Jesus turn their lives around.

We pray for those whose mistakes are public,
and for leaders who have misused their power...

May Jesus turn their lives around.

We pray for ourselves and for one another.

May Jesus turn our lives around.

Amen.

Send us out, Lord,

not perfect creations but always work in progress.

Keep before us the vision of heaven on earth.

Show us the way of life that is the pattern of Christ.

Fill our hearts with the hope and promise

of your ongoing work of transformation in our lives.

now and every day.

Amen.

Sunday 8th May 2022

Call to worship:

Come, all you people, wandering and lost, far from home.

Come to the shepherd – the one who guides us,

The one who remakes us, and the one who will bring us to safety.

Listen! The shepherd is calling!

Listen! The shepherd is searching for you.

Listen! He is calling you by name.

Amen.

Prayer:

Let us come before the God of our salvation, offering him all praise and glory.

Let us join the angels standing around the throne, as we offer ourselves in worship to God, saying: Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength to be our God for ever and ever. Amen.

Lord, you walk with us through all kinds of terrain in life: mountains, mole hills, valleys, cliff tops, deserts, woods, town centres, playing fields.

When the going gets tough and life takes on a dark hue we sometimes attempt to push through it on our own, only to find ourselves weighed down and getting nowhere fast. We may despair of ever being rid of our burdens and seeing life in colour again. Forgive us for these times, for not resting in you, for not trusting in the light of your promises, for not persevering in faith. Merciful Lord. Forgive us we pray.

The Lord is our shepherd, who restores our soul. He washes us clean and anoints us with the oil of forgiveness. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

Reading:

Revelation 7v9-17

Reflection:

The Book of Revelation isn't for the faint-hearted. Its' language and themes are complex to say the least. It is traditionally credited to John the apostle and dated around 90-95 AD. The kind of writing here (apocalyptic) was commonly used by Jewish authors at this time in history. Through bizarre images, vivid pictures of death and supernatural creatures and cryptic language the writers are expressing their hope of a time when evil will be defeated, and peace ushered in. Revelation uses this style of writing but puts its hope in Jesus. This book has been interpreted in many ways over the years but its main purpose is not to create speculation about the future. Its main purpose is to encourage Christians in every age to maintain their faith despite opposition.

This is a vision of the worship of God. In it people no longer cry out 'How long?' but are before Gods throne worshipping night and day. Is this meant to be an image of heaven? Will we be robed in white and worshipping God all day long?

I wonder what piece of clothing best expresses your personality? Is it joggers, jeans, shirt and tie, a dress? How comfortable would you be in that image? Does the idea of white robes in some heavenly realm appeal to you? Or not?

John sees a multitude worshipping God, many thousands worshipping in white robes. Is that your vision of heaven? Maybe you've not thought about it a great deal. Obviously, I don't know what heaven will be like but I have some ideas about recognizing loved ones, seeing the beauty of all that God has created and worship of God. But white robes? Endless worship? I'm really not sure, and that's OK. It is perfectly OK to not be sure. What I am sure of is God's presence in my life and a place after death. When our son died, I wanted desperately to know if I would know him and he me when in heaven. Would his disability be gone? Would he be healed and what would that mean? I really didn't think about him in a white robe worshipping God endlessly. I think of heaven as being the best bits of life on earth, but I still don't know the answers.

Wrestling with God and scripture is how we grow in our faith, passages like this stretch us and challenge us. Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Lamb of God, we thank you for your loving sacrifice. Thank you for washing us clean, for putting purpose, light and colour into our dark lives. Thank you for your perseverance with us, your never-ending provision of wisdom and strength that helps guide us through all life's circumstances. To you be thank and praise. Amen.

The blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us today and always. **Amen**

Sunday 15th May 2022

O Lord, all the world belongs to you.
And you are always making all things new.
What is wrong, you forgive,
And the new life you give
Is what's turning the world upside down.

Hymn - StF 137:

New every morning is the love
Our waking and uprising prove;
Through sleep and darkness safely brought
Restored to life, and power, and thought.

New mercies, each returning day
Hover around us while we pray.
New perils past, new sins forgiven,
New thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven.

Prayers

For being with us at our beginning,
for being with us at our journey's end,
for being with us today, here and now,
we say a heartfelt: Thank you, Lord.

For relationships,
for love and friendship,
for you making your home among us,
we say a heartfelt: Thank you, Lord.

For your sharing our tears,
for your words trustworthy and true,
for your promises that give us hope,
we say a heartfelt: Thank you, Lord.

For the journey we are on today;
for your ever-loving presence
and the joyful expectation of what is to come,
we say a heartfelt: Thank you, Lord.
Amen.

Reading – Revelation 21: 1 – 6

Reflection

Do you ever watch BBC's The Repair Shop? Lots of people do – it is one of the most watched TV programmes of recent years. People are fascinated to see old and battered objects – usually well past their best – transformed by the skill and loving care of the craftspeople who work on them. They often speak about preserving as much as possible of the original. But it is hard to see how the thing can be restored because it seems so far gone! And yet...we inevitably see a remarkable transformation. 'See, I am making things new' could be the show's catchphrase! What was and is becomes something renewed, made new.

But, of course, it is not just the objects themselves. There is often a real emotional pull in the backstories and the memories associated with the objects. And the transformation of the object gives new life to these stories too – and to the people who share them. Grandmother or grandfather's story will be told with renewed passion and passed on to another generation. What was and is and will be.

This is something like the vision of Revelation, especially the part we read today. The writer, John, sees all things being renewed. The world of the past and the present day is replaced by a new world in which heaven comes to earth. God lives among his people. God will be present and provide all things to his people. Knowing the past and living the present gives great hope to John's view of the future.

But it isn't all about the future. It is the same God who 'was' (God of Abraham, of Moses, of the prophets, and was with us in Jesus), who 'is' now. Who is God of, and God with us in, the present. Our lives matter in the here and now, and our work and worship are – at least in part – about us seeking to bring the future into the present, to make it real now. So, our task is not only to follow Jesus to the holy city, but to rebuild the city where we are, making the kingdom come everywhere and for all.

Let us pray for others:

We pray, dear God,
for places where there is division and for countries in the grip
of civil war...may your Holy Spirit bring peace;
for countries where there is religious persecution...
may your Holy Spirit bring unity;
for towns and cities where crime and violence brings fear...
may your Holy Spirit bring hope;
for homes where there is brokenness...
may your Holy Spirit bring healing;
for churches where there is anxiety
may your holy Spirit bring life:
for all our families, friends and neighbours for those who are
unwell, sad, afraid or in need
may your Holy Spirit bring comfort. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn - MHB 969:

O Lord of heaven and earth and sea
To thee all praise and glory be;
How shall we show our love to thee;
Who givest all?

For peaceful homes and healthful days.
For all the blessings earth displays,
We owe thee thankfulness and praise
Who givest all.

Thou didst not spare thine only Son
But gave Him for a world undone
And freely with that blessed one
Thou givest all.

For souls redeemed, for sins forgiven.
For means of grace and hopes of heaven.
Father, all praise to Thee be given
Who givest all.

Closing Prayer

Father God, Alpha and Omega,
the beginning and the end of all things,
you know our past – the burdens we carry.
We know that you will wipe away every tear
and make all things new.
Help us to learn from the past, live in the present,
and hope for the future.
In all of life's joys and sadnesses,
may we love one another as you love us.
Amen.

Aldersgate Sunday 22nd May 2022

Call to worship - God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Come, Holy Spirit, renew us we pray, be in our worship, in our prayers and in our meditations. **Amen**

On this Aldersgate Sunday we take time to remember Charles and John Wesley's faith journeys and our own experiences of growing in faith.

Opening Hymn- O for a thousand tongues to sing

- 1 O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace!
- 3 Jesus — the name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease ;
'tis music in the sinner's ears,
'tis life, and health, and peace.
- 4 He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
he sets the prisoner free ;
his blood can make the foulest clean,
his blood availed for me.
- 6 See all your sins on Jesus laid :
the Lamb of God was slain ;
his soul was once an offering made
that all may heaven gain.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Opening Prayer

O LORD God Almighty, Father of angels and men,
We praise and bless your holy name for all your goodness
and loving kindness to humanity.
We bless you for our creation, preservation,
and for your unceasing generosity to us throughout our lives;

But above all, we bless you for your great love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ. We bless you for bringing us safe to the beginning of a new day. Keep us, we pray, from all things hurtful to body or soul, and grant us your pardon and peace, So that, being cleansed from all our sins, We might serve you with quiet hearts and minds, and continue in the same until our life's end, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer. **Amen.**

Readings Romans 5 v1-11

John 12: 23-26: Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me. *(NIV)*

Reflection

Have you ever really aspired to achieve something? You tried really hard and at times it seemed your goal was beyond your grasp, maybe you never achieved it?

Once a member of the public said to the world famous pianist Lewinski– “I would give my life to be able to play the piano like you” –“I did”, came the reply. Great achievements usually come only because of dedication.

Sometimes people are naturally gifted and pick up a particular skill or knowledge easily. Sometimes there is a moment when it all clicks and suddenly makes sense and the task being learned, which was difficult, becomes easier.

I share this, as we a way into appreciating how people grow in their Christian faith. Some people have a dramatic conversion experience, while for many it takes time to come to an understanding of their faith, which is also a work of the Holy Spirit.

I wonder how much of the vocation of John and Charles Wesley came from wanting to emulate their father - he was often away studying at Oxford and it fell to their mother Suzanna, to bring them up. However much John and Charles were following in their father's footsteps, their Christian nurture was very much shaped by their mother's Puritan upbringing. The meetings in the Epworth kitchen were very much a forerunner to the later Methodist Societies.

In our Gospel reading Jesus explains how we need to die to self and follow Christ. For years the Wesley brothers had tried to serve Christ in their own strength. It was only when they chose to trust God for their salvation, that their hearts were strangely warmed, the penny had dropped we might say. Our Salvation is a gift of God's grace to be received not earned.

Response – *time of quiet contemplation and a prayer.*

O God, seeing as there is in Christ Jesus an infinite fullness of all that we can want or desire,
May we all receive from him, grace upon grace;
grace to pardon our sins, and subdue our iniquities;
to justify our persons and to sanctify our souls;
and to complete that holy change, that renewal of our hearts,
Which will enable us to be transformed into the blessed image in which you created us.
O make us all acceptable to be partakers of the inheritance of your saints in light. **Amen.**

Closing Hymn — And can it be

- 1 And can it be that I should gain
an interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died he for me, who caused his pain?
For me, who him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

- 2 'Tis mystery all: the Immortal dies!
Who can explore his strange design?
In vain the first-born seraph tries
to sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
let angel minds enquire no more.
- 4 Long my imprisoned spirit lay
fast bound in sin and nature's night;
thine eye diffused a quickening ray —
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light,
my chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.
- 5 No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in him, is mine!
Alive in him, my living Head,
and clothed in righteousness divine,
bold I approach the eternal throne,
and claim the crown, through Christ, my own.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

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Sunday 29th May 2022

Call to worship

Father God, you give us so much, and yet we long for more.
Help us to open ourselves to you today, and draw us closer to
you.

Help us to be open to one another, and draw us closer
together.

Amen.

Prayer

Father God, you sent your Son, Jesus Christ,
from the throne room with an invitation
to come, follow and see your glory.

We come and we glorify your name.

You are the one true God, righteous and just.

We come and we glorify your name.

God of judgement, power and joy.

We come and we glorify your name.

Bright morning star, all-inclusive God.

We come and we glorify your name.

Your call to the very first disciples, Lord, was 'Come, follow me.'

We follow you today, Lord.

But sometimes we can fall out of step with you.

Our longing to walk closely with you can get hijacked by our
longing to belong to the 'in crowd' of the moment.

And our behaviour makes us poor witnesses for you.

Lord, we are sorry; help us to live unselfishly.

At times our words may not be nice

and we're at fault of quarrelling with one another.

Lord, we are sorry; help us to live in unity.

Sometimes fear of the consequences of speaking out
and sharing of you can silence us.

Lord, we are sorry; strengthen our faith.

Help us to make the most of every opportunity.

To be better witnesses for you

so that others will come and know the love and joy
of belonging to your family.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Reading

Acts 16:16-34

Reflection

In a week in which we have celebrated Christ's ascension, we find ourselves focusing on the early church, and in particular those early Christians charged with delivering the Good News. Today's story concerns Paul and Silas whose journey has taken them to Philippi, a proud colony determined to keep its Roman standards and culture.

Having exorcised a spirit from a young slave girl, thus robbing her captors of their income from her predictions, Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown in jail. Despite their difficult circumstances they continued to witness to the other prisoners, singing hymns to God and praying. I wonder how we respond during our times of challenge and difficulty. Are those the times when we are closest to God, or when we feel far from him?

Into that challenge came the earthquake that shook the prison causing the cell doors to open. The jailer assumes the prisoners have escaped, and having failed to fulfil the responsibility given to him by his authorities, he knows the same authorities will require him to pay with his life. What he doesn't anticipate is that Paul and Silas have not used their freedom to escape from prison. They recognise that they have a higher calling – theirs is a spiritual calling for the salvation of souls. Having alerted the jailer to their presence, he is shocked to hear why they hadn't escaped.

Once they tell him about Jesus, he is so moved that he wants to exchange his current authority, which requires him to take his own life, for the authority of Jesus which requires him to lay down his life for the freedom of others.

How can he be saved? 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.' This means trusting that

Jesus' opposite way of life really is Life. It means trusting that Jesus' rescue mission in the world is worth giving your life to. It means using your freedom to serve others so they can know the love of God in Christ.

Prayer

Come, Lord Jesus, into situations of imprisonment in our world today.

For those imprisoned against their will, exploited and abused;
for those imprisoned by special needs that the world doesn't understand or have time for;

for those imprisoned by the darkness of depression and anxiety;

for those imprisoned by addiction;

for those imprisoned by their pursuit of wealth;

for those imprisoned by fears of any kind.

Come, Lord Jesus, and set your people free.

Amen.

Blessing

Lord, we have come together,
and now you send us out with your blessing.

As we go out,

come, Lord Jesus!

As we go home,

come, Lord Jesus!

As we go about our weekly activities,

come, Lord Jesus!

Wherever we are,

be with us, Lord Jesus!

Amen.