

  
**Cheshire South Methodist Circuit**  
**Worship at Home - Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

**Call to Worship**

Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvellous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The Lord has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations. (*Psalm 98: 1 - 2*)

**StF no. 445** *He came to earth not to be served*

**1** He came to earth, not to be served,  
But gave his life to be a ransom for many;  
The Son of God, the Son of Man,  
He shared our pain and bore our sins in  
his body.

*King of kings, and Lord of lords,  
I lift my voice in praise,  
Such amazing love, but I do believe  
This King has died for me.*

**2** And so I stand, a broken soul,  
To see the pain that I have brought to  
Jesus;  
And yet each heart will be consoled,  
To be made new, the joy of all believers.

*King of kings ...*

**3** And from now on, through all my days,  
I vow to live each moment here for Jesus;  
Not looking back, but giving praise  
For all my Lord has done for this believer.

*King of kings ...*

*CCLI 821965 John Pantry*

**Prayers of adoration and confession**

With you, O God, we are surrounded by love, by meaning and purpose, peace and completeness. You are our all, our grounding and our reason for being. You are our truth and in you we put our trust, in you we believe, in you we find strength and purpose, joy and hope. You know us in our imperfection, we glimpse you and catch our breath at the wonder of the revelation. We hear an echo and we strain our ears to hear it again. We sense your presence and we tense our being wanting more. You are within us and yet beyond us. We adore you for what we know and what is still to be revealed. **Amen.**

In humble sadness now, Lord, we come before you, as we recall those times when we have fallen into wrongdoing, by our thoughts, our actions, and our neglect of your will. We are aware that you see into our lives and hearts, and know those things for which we need to repent, and we remember them now; and in sincerity and sorrow, we tell you of our repentance, and ask you to forgive us. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Our God is a loving Father, and He hears our sinful sorrow. Through His grace and mercy we can hear His words to us: your sins are forgiven, go in peace. Thanks be to God. **Amen**

**Reading:** *John 15: 9 - 17*

<sup>9</sup>“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your

joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup> My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command. <sup>15</sup> I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. <sup>17</sup> This is my command: Love each other.

### **Message**

If you read, or hear our gospel verses this week, you may have been struck by some of the words that Jesus uses, some of which seem to contradict each other. Of course, this is part of John's gospel that is read often, because and this may cause us to gloss over it, because Jesus has spoken of the Father's love many times. But its message is important, being part of the last things that Jesus told his disciples before he went to his death. *My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you ... You are my friends if you do what I command. And I no longer call you servants ...* In times past, I have often thought about these things, because I hear in Jesus' tone as he speaks a sense of urgency, that the disciples will understand what he is telling them, and his need to emphasise to them how they are part of a wonderful family – God, who loves and sent His Son, Jesus himself, whose love flows to the Father and to his disciples, and the work that the disciples must do to spread the good news of that love to all who will listen.

We know, from our other readings of the Gospels, that the disciples were ordinary human beings, like us, and who often behaved in 'un-loving' ways. Think of James and John, wanting to be Jesus' favourites, and sit on each side of him in glory. Think, at the same time, of the anger that their action stirred up in the other disciples, because they tried to be 'first in line' in importance. Think of the times when, amongst themselves, they discussed '*which of them was the greatest*' even when they were in Jesus' company, but thought he might not be listening. (He was, of course). But Jesus knew that if they were to become the disciples they needed to be, then they needed to set aside their internal struggles, and love each other. They needed to form a tightly-knit group that would enable them to support each other through all the days ahead, and beyond, into their mission for Jesus in the wider world.

Time and time again, Jesus encouraged them not to just look at him, and see what he did (although that was important too), but to watch more closely, and listen more carefully, to understand the real relationship that Jesus had with his Father. Several of them had been present when they had heard God's voice speaking when Jesus was transfigured, but in true human style they had been panicked, and uncertain of what was happening. They knew that Jesus rose very early in the morning to pray to his Father (often they had to come looking for him to 'bring him down to earth'), but we do not hear clearly about the prayer life of the disciples until after Pentecost. Certainly they all gathered together in the upper room after his crucifixion, and resurrection, but we understand the reason for that was 'fear of the Jews'. Only after the gift of the Holy Spirit came on that Pentecost day, and they each received the power that Jesus had promised, was their reaction to meet together, every day, to break bread together and to pray. And it was that build-up of prayerful support for each other and the world that

enabled them to gain strength from the gift of the Holy Spirit, and to know that they could rely on each other as they did the work that Jesus had said they must. And they did indeed bear fruit, because wherever they went, new groups of people accepted the good news of Jesus, and watched how the disciples lived, and came to be followers and believers themselves.

Some people think that they can be Christians on their own. They pride themselves that because they read their Bibles, and pray and live in a 'good' way, which is all that is needed. Going to church is not necessary. And for a while, it may be as they think. But no-one can stand alone, without spiritual food and encouragement. Jesus' parable about the vine and the branches makes that very clear. Nothing can grow unless it is firmly attached to, in this case, the vine itself (Jesus), and anything not attached withers, and breaks. You have perhaps had several different supports in your life – your parents, your family, your friends and colleagues, your church, and each group has given you strength and encouragement through your shared experiences. Jesus invites us to share with him, in his love for the Father, and in the Father's love for us. When we are willing to accept that invitation, we give joy to them, not just because we have shown that we want to be part of them, but because ever since we were born they have wanted us to share in their joy that we exist, and to receive and enjoy all that they are waiting to give us. And the giving never stops, throughout all our lives, until we are personally reunited with them in heaven. Jesus chose each one of us to be part of his heavenly family, and he should not need to command us to love, because we know how warm and special loving relationships can be. Wherever we are at the moment in our lives, we can continue to bear fruit for Jesus in the simple ways of life; the gratitude for kindnesses, the telephone call of support, the prayers we say for others in the quietness of our time alone with God. Like the disciples, we are human, but we, too, can also call on the Holy Spirit to help us whenever we are struggling. Take my life, Lord, and let it be consecrated to you alone. **Amen**

### **Prayers of intercession**

All knowing God, we thank you for our calling as your disciples. We acknowledge that your love is great and beautiful, beyond our understanding. We pray for those who feel that they are unworthy of your love, those who once loved you but have turned away, or forgotten you, and those who have never heard your name. May they each hear your voice and be stirred to turn to you.

Lord God, we pray for those whose faith is tested daily due to poverty, persecution or war. You know their needs and hopes. May they have the courage to trust in you, and place their lives in your hands.

We pray for the leaders of nations, governments, church leaders, our King and the royal family.

May they have your wisdom and discernment to act responsibly and work for the good of all. May they understand your way of love for everyone, and use their powers to make our world a true place of justice and peace.

We pray for those who are suffering in so many different ways and places, remembering

particularly those known to us. We lift them to God, and ask his blessing, healing and peace in their lives. ...

We ask all these prayers in confidence and in Jesus' name. Amen

**StF no 566** *Take my life and let it be*

**1** Take my life, and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to thee;  
Take my moments and my days,  
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

**2** Take my hands, and let them move  
At the impulse of thy love;  
Take my feet, and let them be  
Swift and beautiful for thee.

**3** Take my voice, and let me sing  
Always, only, for my King;  
Take my lips, and let them be  
Filled with messages from thee.

**4** Take my silver and my gold,  
Not a mite would I withhold;  
Take my intellect and use  
Every power as thou shalt choose.

**5** Take my will, and make it thine;  
It shall be no longer mine;  
Take my heart – it is thine own;  
It shall be thy royal throne.

**6** Take my love; my Lord, I pour  
At thy feet its treasure-store;  
Take myself, and I will be  
Ever, only, all for thee.

*CCLI 821965 Frances Ridley Havergal*

**A prayer of blessing**

May God bless us, and keep us. May the light of His face shine upon us, and bring us peace. Go forward into the week ahead, knowing that God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit is with us always. **Amen**

***This act of worship was prepared by Sue Taylor***