

**Cheshire South Methodist Circuit**   
Service at home sheet Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2024

**Opening Prayer**

God of power, majesty, and wonder, we worship and adore you with our hearts, our souls and our minds. As we begin this time of worship, open our hearts to you, challenge us and transform us. In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

**StF no. 248** *I heard the voice of Jesus say*

**1** I heard the voice of Jesus say:  
'Come unto me and rest;  
lay down, O weary one, lay down  
your head upon my breast.'  
I came to Jesus as I was,  
weary and worn and sad,  
I found in him a resting-place,  
and he has made me glad.

**2** I heard the voice of Jesus say:  
'Behold, I freely give  
the living water; thirsty one,  
stoop down and drink and live.'  
I came to Jesus, and I drank  
of that life-giving stream;  
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
and now I live in him.

**3** I heard the voice of Jesus say:  
'I am this dark world's Light;  
look unto me, your morn shall rise,  
and all your day be bright.'  
I looked to Jesus, and I found  
in him my star, my sun;  
and in that light of life I'll walk,  
till travelling days are done.

**Let us pray together**

**Adoration:** Spend some time thinking about who God is to you and what it means to have a relationship with him. Spend some time praising God for his amazing love and his awesome faithfulness.

Spend some time thinking about what God has done and is doing and all the promises he has kept. Thank him and praise him for all his wonderful and glorious works.

**Confession:** If we confess to God those things we have said, thought or done that have hurt others and in turn hurt him, and we do so in sincerity and truth, he forgives our sins.

Spend some time saying sorry, genuinely, to God.

The words of grace are ours to receive and believe: our sins are forgiven. **Amen.** Thanks be to God.

**Thanksgiving:** Think about your relationship with God. We all go through times where we feel that God is distant, but God is always there and is always faithful. Spend some time thanking him for his faithfulness and his love.

Think about your life at the moment. What are you thankful for? Even if it is hard at the moment, try and think of one thing to thank God for – whether it is the beauty of the season that we are enjoying, or the rain and coolness, or the beauty of the sunrise or sunset, or that one person in your life who has always been faithful.

Spend some time thanking God for everything and anything.

**Today's Gospel Reading: Mark 6:30-34**

<sup>30</sup> The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup> He said to them, 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. <sup>32</sup> And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. <sup>33</sup> Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. <sup>34</sup> As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

**Time to Reflect**

There is a sense of accountability with the disciples to Jesus and to each other. Perhaps, accountability isn't the best word, though? Maybe 'fellowship' might be a better word.

Verse 34 stands out in the middle of the story we just read: "*As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.*"

Jesus shows a lot of compassion throughout Mark, but I think our understanding of that word "compassion" might be significantly different from Mark's understanding. We may think of this word as a synonym for pity, or even empathy. But compassion really means *suffering with* the one who suffers. Compassion is something you feel deep within you. Compassion is what bubbles up in us when we see someone else experiencing a pain we have experienced and know all too well. We internalize that pain in the very core of our being. It's the kind of compassion a parent feels the first time a child rides a bike without training wheels, especially if that ride ends up with a scraped knee. It's the compassion that someone who has been the victim of bullying feels when they see someone else being bullied.

When Jesus looked on these crowds of people who had chased him around the lake, he felt their pain, their confusion, their deep desire to know God in a way their scribes and teachers had never shown them. He felt their need to know God's love for them. He suffered as they suffered, in the very core of his being.

When Jesus looks at you and me, he has compassion for us, too. He feels our pain, our sorrow, our frustration, and our worry. He suffers with us in our broken relationships, our need to make ends meet, and our deep desire to be right with God. He sees us running around like sheep without a shepherd, and he calls us to walk with him, as he walks with us. But look at the way Jesus shows compassion to all us sheep, as we try to anticipate where Jesus is going. He doesn't give us a little token handout. He doesn't put a little bandage on our brokenness and send us on our way. He doesn't accommodate our wrong-headedness. The method Jesus uses to show compassion is to *teach*.

He teaches us how to be his disciples, how to build the Kingdom of God, by inviting us to participate in that Kingdom. Jesus invests in our lives by inviting us into his life. When Jesus taught his followers to preach repentance and offer healing and wholeness, he was inviting those apostles into partnership with him, so that his ministry could expand. He offers us that same invitation. We are called to share good news with people we know, to offer healing and redemption to those whose pain arouses gut-wrenching compassion in us. Jesus invites us to invest in their lives by inviting them into our own, so we can teach them what Jesus taught. When we accept this invitation to discipleship, amazing, miraculous things happen. And the Kingdom of God grows through our becoming the people that Jesus asks us to be –compassionate followers that he sends into the world to expand his ministry. **Amen**

*(adapted from notes by Jo Anne Taylor)*

**A time of prayer** - We come to the part of our worship now as we pray for others and ourselves.

We pray for God's world.

As we pray for God's world, we are mindful that we have not been wise, loving stewards of it. We have been greedy and selfish, rather than focusing on the beauty and wonder, and encouraging its flourishing. We pray that God will open our eyes and our hearts to see his world as he sees it, with love, joy, and delight, and help us to do what we can to take care of it.

***"The Lord hears our prayer". "Thanks be to God".***

We pray for world rulers, that they would rule with truth and justice, mercy and grace and that they would remember that all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Jesus Christ. We think of the places where war destroys lives and livelihoods, and where there is only the greed for land, for power, and for self. We pray for those who risk their lives every day to support the suffering, feed the starving, and work for justice and peace.

***"The Lord hears our prayer". "Thanks be to God".***

We pray for God's church worldwide, that we would unite in the common goal to worship and serve God together in a spirit of unity and holiness. We also pray for the churches in our community, and we offer up to God our prayers for the Holy Spirit to bring life, and light and power, so that we may truly worship God as he deserves, and be his faithful people to those who need to hear and share the good news of the gospel.

***“The Lord hears our prayer”. “Thanks be to God”.***

We take time now to pray for those who are known to us. We pray for those who are going through times of sadness, sickness, or anxiety, that they would know God’s peace and comfort. We pray for those experiencing times of hope and joy, that they will recognise and feel God’s love and not take this time for granted. We pray also for ourselves, to our God who knows us fully, loves us dearly, and understands our needs, hopes and dreams.

***“The Lord hears our prayer”. “Thanks be to God”.***

***The Lord’s Prayer***

*Our Father .....*

**StF no. 481 *The Lord’s my shepherd***

**1** The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;  
he makes me lie in pastures green,  
he leads me by the still, still waters,  
his goodness restores my soul.

**2** He guides my ways in righteousness,  
and he anoints my head with oil;  
and my cup -- it overflows with joy,  
I feast on his pure delights.  
*And I will trust in you alone ...*

*Chorus*

*And I will trust in you alone,  
and I will trust in you alone,  
for your endless mercy follows me,  
your goodness will lead me home.*

**3** And though I walk the darkest path --  
I will not fear the evil one,  
for you are with me, and your rod and  
staff  
are the comfort I need to know.  
*And I will trust in you alone...*

*CCL 821965 Stuart Townend*

**A prayer of blessing**

God of faithfulness, always journeying with us, as we journey through this week and all that lies ahead, help us to remember you are always with us.

Grant us faithfulness to you and to Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. Grant us strength to witness and proclaim your kingdom of love and grace.

And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be among you and those whom you cherish in your heart, now and always. **Amen.**