

Sunday 15th November 2020

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

'Lord, we come into your awesome presence, from the shadows into your radiance' May the light of your presence guide our worship today. Amen .

Hymn: Be Thou my Vision (Singing the Faith 545)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/hymns/be-thou-my-vision-o-lord-of-my-heart-stf-545/>

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;
be thou my great Father, thy child let me be;
be thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true
might;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong
tower:
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my
power.

Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise:
be thou mine inheritance now and always;
be thou and thou only the first in my heart:
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,

O grant me its joys after victory is won;
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Irish, 8th century

translated by Mary Elizabeth Byrne (1880-1931)

versified by Eleanor Henrietta Hull (1860-1935)

(alt.)

Let us pray together

Prayer of Praise and Invocation

Lord Jesus, Light of the World;
You came to turn our world upside down,
or rather the right way up.
Word of God made flesh,
You came to show us how to truly live, to love
and to serve;
how to live out the values of your kingdom here
on earth.

As we gather to praise you for all that you are
and all that you bring, we pray;

'mirrored here, may our lives tell your story'
today and everyday.

Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Lord we acknowledge that there have been times
when we have not shared the riches of your
kingdom with others.

Times when we have taken the easy route,
choosing options that require less time, less
energy, less thought.

Times when we have turned back to the ways of
the world, that are contrary to the values of your
kingdom.

And in a moment of quiet we bring into your light our own personal confessions.

Lord, we remember you are a God of mercy and grace, who forgives us and transforms us, by the power of your Spirit, into the people you have truly made us to be. Amen.

Today's Gospel Reading: Matthew 25: 14-30

The Parable of the Talents

14 'For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵to one he gave five talents,* to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, "Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents." ²¹His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." ²²And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, "Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents." ²³His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."

²⁴Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the

ground. Here you have what is yours." ²⁶But his master replied, "You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. ²⁹For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. ³⁰As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Today's Epistle Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11
You may like to read Acts 17: 1-9 which details Pauls' visit to Thessalonica.

⁵Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters,* you do not need to have anything written to you. ²For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³When they say, 'There is peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! ⁴But you, beloved,* are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; ⁵for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. ⁶So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; ⁷for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. ⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

¹⁰who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Acts of the Apostles 17:1-9

The Uproar in Thessalonica

17After Paul and Silas* had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ²And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three sabbath days argued with them from the scriptures, ³explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Messiah* to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, 'This is the Messiah,* Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you.' ⁴Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. ⁵But the Jews became jealous, and with the help of some ruffians in the market-places they formed a mob and set the city in an uproar. While they were searching for Paul and Silas to bring them out to the assembly, they attacked Jason's house. ⁶When they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some believers* before the city authorities,* shouting, 'These people who have been turning the world upside down have come here also, ⁷and Jason has entertained them as guests. They are all acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus.' ⁸The people and the city officials were disturbed when they heard this, ⁹and after they had taken bail from Jason and the others, they let them go.

Time to Reflect

I used to work for a company where every month we were visited by a mystery shopper. There used to be quite a lot of anxiety amongst certain staff around the time this visit may occur. When exactly would they come? How would we be rated? Our boss had us doing lots of extra tasks to prepare. However, I was never that worried, thinking if we were behaving as we should be, we would have nothing to be concerned about. One of the questions concerning the people in Thessalonica, who Paul is writing to, is 'when will the day of the Lord come?'

Paul replies, 'about times and dates we do not need to write to you', that day 'will come like a thief in the night' (1 Thess 5: 1-2).

However, for those who are living in the way God has guided them, 'this light will not come like a searchlight to reveal the sins done under the cover of darkness', but like the light of a new day (Howard Marshall, 2011, p1283).

The Thessalonians focus should not be on trying to predict this day, but living as children of light. In my job the mystery shopper came to assess how we were treating all customers. It wouldn't have done the company any good if we had only treated the mystery shopper well. It was the many other customers every day that would be speaking to their family and friends and at risk of not returning.

How we treat all people, how we live our lives on a daily basis, amidst the challenges and competing values of the world, matters.

The church in Thessalonica was relatively new. Paul had to leave after only three preaching sessions due to mob violence from those who opposed his teachings.

The new believers were living during a time of persecution. There is the military image of being awake and on watch, but here, 'peace and security', a slogan sometimes associated with imperial Roman rule, is not brought about through military might and threat of violence, which only brings fragile peace. Rather the Thessalonian's are to put on the defensive breastplate and helmet of faith, hope and love (Roots Nov – Dec 2020). They are to live as a contrast society. They are to live the Jesus way. Our Gospel reading is also set at a time where the values of God's' kingdom are clashing with the values of the world.

This parable is told two days before the Passover festival in what we now call Holy Week, where the story reaches its climax and Jesus himself brings about peace, not through violence but through the way of the cross.

Jesus, firstly is offering a challenge to his own day, a time where he is forcing a final confrontation between God's kingdom and the system that had resisted it.

The third slave could be seen as representing the Pharisees, who had been given the Law of Moses,

the Temple, and the command to share God's blessing and yet had kept the light to themselves. The other slaves can be seen as those who take the good news of God's kingdom they have been entrusted with, share it and act to help it grow (Wright, 2004).

To ponder

What do we do with the news of God's' kingdom that has been entrusted to us?

How do we live each day in light of this news?

As Paul writes to the Thessalonians, how can we encourage one another and build ourselves up in our faith?

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

We pray for places where people face persecution for their faith and are not free to worship you, and for people who have not yet heard the Good News of Jesus;

Lord, help us shine your light and share our faith.

We pray for those who fear for the future, those facing job uncertainty or loss, those anxious about the continued impact of the Covid pandemic;

Lord, help us shine your light and share your hope.

We pray for those who are ill, those facing loneliness, isolation and separation from loved ones;

Lord, help us shine your light and share your love.

In a moment of quiet we bring before you our personal prayers.

Lord, we remember 'the light of your love is always shining' as we offer you these prayers in Jesus' name.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Hear the Call of the Kingdom (Singing the Faith 407)

<https://youtu.be/d5AkyRFIKaM>

Hear the call of the kingdom,
lift your eyes to the King;
let his song rise within you
as a fragrant offering
of how God, rich in mercy,
came in Christ to redeem
all who trust in his unfailing grace.

Hear the call of the kingdom
to be children of light
with the mercy of heaven,
the humility of Christ;
walking justly before him,
loving all that is right,
that the life of Christ may shine through us.

King of heaven, we will answer the call.
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,
filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim
salvation in Jesus' name.

Hear the call of the kingdom
to reach out to the lost
with the Father's compassion
in the wonder of the cross,
bringing peace and forgiveness,
and a hope yet to come:
let the nations put their trust in him.

King of heaven, we will answer the call ...
*Keith Getty (b. 1974), Kristyn Getty (b. 1980) and
Stuart Townend (b. 1963)*

A prayer of blessing

As we are sent out to live as children of light;
May we walk in faith,
be sustained by hope,
and share the all-embracing love of God
with everyone we meet.

Amen.

Original material by Rachel Atkinson

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