

Sunday 29 August 2021

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

We prepare ourselves with a time of quiet.

Opening Prayer

Loving God, we thank you that you hold us in this time and for all time, that you know our comings and goings, and are intimate with the innermost thoughts of our hearts. Because of this we can come to you in confidence and in trust.

So, entrusting ourselves to you, we pray that you would enable us to worship you, in Spirit and in truth.

AMEN.

Hymn: STF 508 Purify my heart

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKfuZVWr-8I>

Purify my heart,
let me be as gold
and precious silver.
Purify my heart,
let me be as gold,
pure gold.

Refiner's fire,
my heart's one desire
is to be holy,
set apart for you, Lord.
I choose to be holy,
set apart for you my master,
ready to do your will.

Purify my heart,
cleanse me from within
and make me holy.
Purify my heart,
cleanse me from my sin,
deep within.

Brian Doerksen (b. 1965)

Let us pray together

Loving God, we must acknowledge before you that your thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are your ways our ways.

You see in us what we cannot see, in our neighbours what we are blind to, seeing the unrefined gold, the unpolished diamond, the beauty and potential in each of us.

HELP US TO SEE THROUGH YOUR EYES, TO CATCH WHAT IS ON YOUR HEART.

You see the end from the beginning and hold all time in your hands. We are too often impatient looking for instant results, making no time for watching or waiting.

HELP US TO SEE THROUGH YOUR EYES, TO CATCH WHAT IS ON YOUR HEART.

You walked the way of the cross before us, calling us to follow, even when we falter and stumble you call us on.

HELP US TO SEE THROUGH YOUR EYES, TO CATCH WHAT IS ON YOUR HEART.

And so we come, asking that you free us from our worst tendencies, and tasking you to liberate our best selves, praying for your grace and pardon.

HELP US TO SEE THROUGH YOUR EYES, TO CATCH WHAT IS ON YOUR HEART.

Help us to hear your word: You are new creations, you are precious and honoured in my sight.

Help us to receive your affirming and transforming love.

HELP US TO SEE THROUGH YOUR EYES, TO CATCH WHAT IS ON YOUR HEART. Amen.

Today's Gospel Reading:

Mark 7: 1-8,14-15, 21-23

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?' He said to them, 'Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, "This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines." You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.'

Then he called the crowd again and said to them, 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that

come out are what defile.' For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.'

Time to Reflect

Over the last 19 months (plus) we have been instructed again and again to observe the ritual of washing our hands, in bathrooms everywhere, in restaurants, and cafes, and even in our churches signs appeared telling us not only how to wash our hands but also how long for, there have been some creative suggestions, from singing Happy Birthday to reciting the Lords Prayer as we carry out what for many of us has now become a frequent ritual, and something we do not just before we eat a meal.

Yesterday I visited my daughter, and was shown by my almost 2 year old grandson how clever he was pulling his stool up to the sink and carefully washing his hands without help before we ate lunch. Interestingly neither mum nor grandma did this!

As I reflect upon that I can almost feel the shock of the Pharisees and scribes who noticed with horror that Jesus disciples were eating without taking part in the ritual of handwashing, thus rendering them defiled. This handwashing along with the washing of pots and cups and more were an integral part of life, showing an outward devotion to God, to the wider community and in some senses to themselves.

Jesus however is not concerned by his disciples actions (or should I say inactions). He points to ritual for rituals sake as being wholly inadequate. To honour God with outward signs whilst having hearts and minds set upon other things was not enough, the ritual, like

our sacraments should have been what we often refer to as an outward sign of an inner grace, a reminder, as our baptism service records, that God has indeed accomplished “All this for you”.

Jesus wants something deeper than outward signs, he wants people to live lives focused upon the goodness and grace of God, people who are living lives centred upon love, to become visible signs of the grace of God at work. He wants us to be clean, to reflect holiness both inwardly and outwardly.

Now I am not suggesting that you should stop washing your hands in these pandemic times, (I make a note for myself there), but perhaps you might use this ritual as a chance to pray, to turn your attention to God, to allow those moments to become an opportunity to examine your heart, or simply to allow the love of God to wash over you as the water washes over your hands. Just as Brother Lawrence found the opportunity to worship God in what he saw originally as menial kitchen work, peeling potatoes and washing pots, thus redeeming it, maybe we can find opportunities every day to find, worship and celebrate God in all things.

Take some time to reflect

A time of prayer

Loving God, in Christ you came and walked this world with engagement and humility. We reflect upon the stories he told, using illustrations from everyday objects and from nature, revealing your presence in even the smallest flower or the lowliest bird.

Help us to live as your holy people. Help us to trust you in all things.

MAY YOUR LOVE BE REVEALED.

We pray for the world, we notice the struggles, not only of the way the pandemic has swept across it, but also the needs of

those afflicted by war, famine and other diseases, those fighting for the reality of climate change to be constantly on the political and global agendas.

Help us to live as your holy people. Help us to trust you in all things.

MAY YOUR LOVE BE REVEALED.

We pray for the church in these ever-changing days, for wisdom and for integrity, for a deep sense of your peace, purpose and mission to be our reason for reaching out. For the courage to let go and to move on when that journey is needed.

Help us to live as your holy people. Help us to trust you in all things.

MAY YOUR LOVE BE REVEALED.

We pray for those we care for and care about, those who might be struggling, those awaiting a birth or a death of some other event that will transform their lives (you may wish to remember some specific people or needs at this point).

Help us to live as your holy people. Help us to trust you in all things.

MAY YOUR LOVE BE REVEALED.

Finally we pray for ourselves. You know us through and through, our concerns, our hopes and our desires. Help us to be signs of your kingdom, through the love and grace you have shown us, and will continue to show us.

Help us to live as your holy people. Help us to trust you in all things.

MAY YOUR LOVE BE REVEALED.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to *STF 345 And can it be*

or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GlwDCmTkRhM>

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?

'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.

He left his Father's throne above --
so free, so infinite his grace --
emptied himself of all but love,
and bled for Adam's helpless race.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
for, O my God, it found out me!

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.

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)

A prayer of blessing

Closing words:

From where we are to where you need us

LOVING GOD LEAD ON

From the security of what we know, to the
wonders you will reveal

LOVING GOD LEAD ON

May we be signs of your grace, revealing your
mercy.

LOVING GOD LEAD ON. BLESS AND KEEP US WE PRAY.

Original Materials by **Sally Coleman**

All

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Local Churches CCCLi 363610

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