

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> May 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.

**Opening Words Psalm 98:1**

- <sup>1</sup> O sing to the LORD a new song,  
for he has done marvellous things.  
His right hand and his holy arm  
have gained him victory.
- <sup>2</sup> The LORD has made known his victory;  
he has revealed his vindication  
in the sight of the nations.
- <sup>3</sup> He has remembered his steadfast love  
and faithfulness  
to the house of Israel.  
All the ends of the earth have seen  
the victory of our God.
- <sup>4</sup> Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the  
earth;  
break forth into joyous song  
and sing praises.
- <sup>5</sup> Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre,  
with the lyre and the sound of melody.
- <sup>6</sup> With trumpets and the sound of the horn  
make a joyful noise before the King,  
the LORD.
- <sup>7</sup> Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;  
the world and those who live in it.
- <sup>8</sup> Let the floods clap their hands;  
let the hills sing together for joy

<sup>9</sup> at the presence of the LORD, for he is  
coming

to judge the earth.  
He will judge the world with  
righteousness,  
and the peoples with equity.

Sing to the Lord a new song,  
for he has done marvellous things.

**Hymn: [All heaven declares, StF 293](#)**

All heaven declares  
the glory of the risen Lord;  
who can compare  
with the beauty of the Lord?  
For ever he will be  
the Lamb upon the throne;  
I gladly bow the knee,  
and worship him alone.

I will proclaim  
the glory of the risen Lord,  
who once was slain  
to reconcile us to God.  
For ever you will be  
the Lamb upon the throne;  
I gladly bow the knee,  
and worship you alone.

*Noel Richards (b. 1955) and Tricia Richards  
(b. 1960)*

Let us pray together:

Gracious and loving God,  
today we bring our praises to You,  
because:

You are the maker and sustainer of all creation, upholding all things by Your hand;  
out of Your great love for the world, in Jesus You chose to leave the holiness and purity of Heaven, embracing life on earth, to live as carpenter and preacher, leading His disciples into all truth and calling them to mission;  
in Jesus, You showed Your care for all people and call us to receive the gift of life won at the cost of His death on the cross; to receive your forgiveness for sin through repentance and faith and Your healing by the power of Your Holy Spirit that we might live in Your power and be transformed into the image of Jesus, in whose Name we pray. Amen.

### **Today's Bible Readings:**

#### **Acts 10:44-48**

<sup>44</sup> While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word.

<sup>45</sup> The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, <sup>46</sup> for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, <sup>47</sup> 'Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' <sup>48</sup> So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

#### **1 John 5:1-6**

5 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ<sup>[a]</sup> has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. <sup>2</sup> By this we know that we love the

children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. <sup>3</sup> For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, <sup>4</sup> for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

<sup>6</sup> This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.

*Footnote 1 John 5:1 Or the Messiah*

### **Today's Gospel Reading: John 15:9-17**

<sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup> I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

<sup>12</sup> 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> No one has greater love 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 you. <sup>15</sup> I do not call you servants<sup>[a]</sup> any longer, because the servant<sup>[b]</sup> does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him

in my name. <sup>17</sup> I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

*Footnotes*

*John 15:15 Gk slaves*

*John 15:15 Gk slave*

## **Time to Reflect**

Recent weeks have seen quite a debate underway about relative freedoms and responsibilities in the light of actual and possible Government announcements easing Covid restrictions - these will no doubt be continuing by the time you receive and read this. This positive tension is found in our readings for today which remind us that as disciples of The Lord Jesus Christ we face a constant series of decisions about how to live authentically as people of faith.

The first section of chapter 5 in the 1<sup>st</sup> letter of John the elder holds this together in a great declaration about what constitutes being a genuine disciple. The other – and probably better-known readings from John’s Gospel and Acts illustrate this well. John’s 1<sup>st</sup> letter was written to a church in trouble – a faction had advocated a view of Christ that made faith more a mystical experience that need not affect how believers lived out what they claimed to believe – rather like some contemporary secular commentators insisting faith is a private matter. John refutes this – and in that sense this passage is straight forward, but his writing is also difficult – because it’s plain and simple to see how far we have to go and grow! This leads John to assert three things:

**1. New birth is the basis of the Christian life (5:1, 4).** Echoing the encounter of Jesus and Nicodemus, John says, “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God” this seems innocent enough, but it calls us to believe that the flesh and blood carpenter of Nazareth shows us who God is!

**2. Faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, is a vital sign of the new birth (5:1, 4, 5).** When Peter preached at the house of Cornelius a remarkable thing happened – people from a non-religious background came to faith and were filled with God’s Holy Spirit – in short, they were saved and changed. John explains to his readers: That Faith is the result of the new birth, not the cause of it (5:1). It’s not the greatness of our faith that forgives, heals and changes us, but the greatness of God’s faithfulness that works in us - we respond to receive that gift with as much (or little) trust as we have. Such faith has a clearly defined object (5:1, 5). Just as bungee jumpers have to trust the elastic rope round their ankles, so trusting in the self-sacrificial death and the rising of Jesus is what connects us to God in the household and family of faith as The Holy Spirit works in us. Our faith, then, has a clearly observable result which John calls “overcoming the world” (5:4, 5). The work of God in us changes us to want to do what God wants (Phil.2:12) so we are changed. When Billy Bray the reprobate Cornish tin miner came to faith, after hearing John Wesley preach, everyone saw the difference and he began describing himself as “The son of a King” – a complete transformation.

**3. Love for God and His children is a vital sign of the new birth (5:1, 2, 3).** As the love of Jesus takes root in our lives, God's Spirit forms the character of Jesus in us – all well and good. But, here's the rub, both John's letter and Jesus in John's Gospel say that love, self-giving love which expects no reward, love like Jesus shows is shown NOT in feelings or good (or daring) deeds, but an obedience which loves fellow believers as part of our witness (John 15:10,14,17).

We are called to become positively different from worldly standards; often when we're different we're seen as negative and judgemental, but when we're positive we're compromised and not very different.

Take time to sit quietly and ask, this week, for whom could the way you live and act show that your faith in Jesus who truly lived, died and rose reflect the reality of the life changing nature of your faith?

#### **Prayers for others**

Lord our God, we pray for our mixed up, muddled and compromised world. May those who lead peoples and nations be inspired to work in ways that benefit all whom they are called to serve. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Where tyranny, violence or oppression spread injustice, may those who know the truth be stirred to challenge and transform situations, for the good of all. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Thank you for those who provide health and vaccination services. May such resources be shared among nations, that

all humanity may attain fulness of life. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for Your Church that we may demonstrate the humility and love of Jesus, declaring in word and deed your immeasurable love. By Your Holy Spirit may we live ever to Your glory, that others may come to know their place in Your family. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

**The Lord's Prayer**  
*Our Father ...*

**Hymn: Listen to [Living Hope by Phil Wickham](#)**

**or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind**

**A prayer of blessing (based on Jude 24-25)**

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and for evermore! Amen.

Original Materials by David Miller  
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We are grateful to all the Ministers and Local Preachers from around the Connexion who have contributed to Worship at Home. This resource is administrated by Ministries: Vocations and Worship in the Connexional Team. We aim to continue to provide these resources until the end of August 2021.