

**Hailsham Methodist Church**  
**Worship at Home**  
**Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020**

*When known, this Order of Service will use the same hymns and bible readings as those used in the Morning Service at Hailsham Methodist Church.*

**Opening Prayer**

Today, O God, let us know your power to make us strong, your counsel to make us wise, your grace to make us holy and your glory to bring us into your presence. Amen.

*Martin Luther (1483-1546)*

**Hymn: This Is The Day** (StF 152)

**Prayers of Thanksgiving**

Dear Father in Heaven, thank you for giving us life, and for helping us to live life wisely and for giving us your written word. Thank you for putting love in our hearts so that we are able to share it with those around us. We thank you Lord, for the autumn season we see all around us. The rich colours everywhere, your creation slowly preparing for winter and for the beauty of your world. Thank you Lord for opening our hearts so that we may know you better every day. We give you our thanks and praise.

**Hymn: Great God, Your Love Has Called Us Here** (StF 499)

**Old Testament Reading: Joshua 3:7-17**

**New Testament Reading: 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13**

**Gospel Reading: Matthew 23:1-12**

**Reflection:**

*"The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practise what they teach. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulder of others, but they are themselves unwilling to lift a finger to move them." (Matthew 23:2-4)*

Matthew spends a whole chapter here on a topic which takes just three verses in Mark (Mark 12:38-40). It is not so much a direct attack on the scribes and Pharisees - after all Jesus is speaking to the crowds and his disciples, rather than to them - but a clear statement of the non-workability of their approach to religion.

The Pharisees were meticulous in religious practice, in terms of their determination to abide by every detail of the law of Moses, and various traditions they believed to be derived from it. The scribes among them were the professors of the day who reckoned to understand the subtlest nuances of interpretation. But despite their determination to achieve right practice of their religion, Jesus has already challenged his disciples to embrace a different kind of righteousness (Matthew 5:20).

Verse 3 gives rise to the familiar proverb, "Practise what you preach". Since Jesus often challenged the attitude of the Pharisees to particular issues such as hand-washing, Sabbath-keeping and divorce (Matthew 15:1-20; 12:1-114; 19:3-9), the whole verse is ironic - the Pharisees themselves demonstrate that it is actually impossible for anyone to do as they say! Despite this, they still insist that it is necessary (verse 4).

The rest of the passage criticises the ostentation and pride in which the Pharisees delight. Phylacteries were small leather boxes worn on the forehead, containing texts from Exodus and Deuteronomy, so that the Mosaic Law was literally at the forefront of their mind. The length of their cloak fringes was a sign of how morally conservative a religious teacher was; in some Christian traditions the amount of clerical collar on display seems to function in a similar way today!

Jesus expects his disciples to shun the culture of honorific titles, and in doing so he asserts his own unique authority as their one true teacher. The statements about self-humbling in verses 11 and 12 have already occurred separately in Jesus' teaching (Matthew 20:26-27; 18:4).

*To Ponder:*

*What do you think might be the equivalents today of the ostentatious phylacteries and fringes? Not just for religious leaders, but for ordinary followers of Christ?*

*What burdens too heavy to bear do you think today's Church places upon its members?*

*In the light of this passage, what are we to make of the use of titles for Church leaders such as 'Most Reverend', 'Your Grace', 'Father', or indeed plain 'Reverend'?*

**Hymn: Lord, Your Church On Earth Is Seeking** (StF 410)

### **Prayers of Confession and Intersession**

We come humbly before you, loving Lord, asking for your forgiveness. For the times when we have forgotten to acknowledge your presence in the everyday things of life. We bring our prayers for this troubled world and its people. We pray for all the homeless and refugees and pray for peace and stability in war torn countries.

We pray for all peoples affected by Covid 19 and the brokenness it has created everywhere. Lord give us wisdom to face this uncertain future with courage and hopefulness. We remember and give thanks for all who work so hard to nurse, care for, and provide for those in need. We pray that those in government will make right decisions to help all of us get through this time of trial and fear.

We give thanks for our church where we can worship in freedom and safety. We pray for your persecuted church worldwide.

We give you our thanks remembering all who have been your servants in the past and who have led, by example, the way of the Christian life.

We bring our own worries and cares before you and ask for guidance. We are sorry for our shortcomings and ask for your healing and wholeness.

Lord be with those known to us in a time of quiet prayer. We ask these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen

### **The Lord's Prayer:**

We say together the prayer Jesus taught us.  
Our Father.....

**Hymn: Jesu, Jesu** (StF 249)

### **Blessing**

May God the Father bless us; may Christ take care of us; may the Holy Spirit enlighten us all the days of our life. The Lord be our Defender and Keeper of body and soul, both now and forever, to the ages of ages. Amen.

Reflection by Revd Dr Stephen Mosedale from 'A Word In Time', Methodist Church website  
Prayers from Pam Cornish, and also some taken from The Methodist Worship Book and from "The Earth Is The Lord's" – the Methodist Prayer Handbook, 2020/2021

The **Remembrance Service** at Hailsham Methodist Church next Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup> November, will be led by Hugh Edwards and will start at **09.45**