

Hailsham Methodist Church
Worship at Home
Sunday 9th May 2021

Call to Worship

Praise the Lord, all you nations! Extol him, all you peoples!
For great is his steadfast love towards us. *Psalms 117, v1-2*

Hymn: A New Commandment I Give Unto You (StF 242)

Prayers of Adoration

Sovereign God, we thank you that you are able to do more than we can ever ask or imagine – where we can do so little, you can do so much, when we can do nothing, you can do everything. Teach us to believe that, not just with our heads but in our hearts.

When life seems dark, the future frightening, our problems insurmountable and our resources to meet them too few, we praise you that you are able to see us through.

When life feels good, the days ahead full of promise, our worries are few and our joys many, we praise you that you are able to offer more still.

When loving is hard, caring involves pain, sharing means sacrifice and believing entails cost, we praise you that you are able to give us strength.

So, Sovereign God, we thank you for loving us before we ever loved you, and for continuing to love us even when we fail to love you in return. You have opened your heart to us, help us to do the same to you. Deepen our love for you and one another. Help us to be faithful and true in all our relationships, and especially our relationship with you. **In the name of Christ, Amen.**

New Testament Reading: Acts 10:44-48,

Hymn: I The Lord Of Sea And Sky (StF 663)

Gospel Reading: John 15:9-17

Reflection: "Abide in my love" (v9)

On the last night of his life, Jesus prepared his disciples for a new phase in his relationship with them after his death. He taught them that just as he had experienced God (the Father's) love for himself, in the same way he had loved them. When he was physically gone, they were to continue to live in a permanent remembrance of this dynamic of receiving and giving back of love.

'Abide' is an old-fashioned word meaning to live permanently somewhere, or be at home with. Jesus was encouraging his disciples to continue after his death to be 'at home' with himself (the Christ), and so also the Father and one another. To live moment by moment with reference to these 'others' would be an eccentric life, a life centred not in themselves.

Jesus told the disciples how to do this. It was not a matter of an idea but of a practice. They were to keep his commandments, as he had kept the Father's commandments (v10). In this way the spiritual joy that Jesus had experienced in abiding in his Father's love would bubble up in his disciples in fullness of life (John 10:10).

In v12 Jesus reminded the disciples that his commandment was to love one another as he had loved them. Jesus had spent three years living in close intimacy with his disciples, who he now called his friends. They were friends, not servants, because they were co-workers with God, intentionally caring for and loving the world, co-operating with God's purposes (as God had originally intended for humans – Genesis 1).

Jesus was about to lay down his life for his friends (v13) and taught them that nothing: no honour, wealth, or power was greater than the self-emptying love of giving your life for friends.

Jesus reminded his disciples, who might feel overwhelmed by the enormity of their calling in his physical absence, that he chose them, they did not choose him. Just as everyone is chosen by God, because of God's love, not because of their inherent qualities.

As we consent to being chosen, abiding in the love of God, Christ and one another, and participating in this dynamic love, so we become fruitful.

To Ponder: When have you been eccentric in living the Christian life?

Have you had the experience of continuing to feel the presence of a loved one after they have died? How would you describe this experience?

When have you experienced being 'fruitful'? What was it like?

Hymn: There's A Wideness In God's Mercy (StF 416)

Prayers of Intercession

Knowing God's love and affection for us, let us pray to God now.

Loving God, in a week where we have held elections, we are mindful of places where there is friction and conflict.

We pray for the Church and for communities which are divided and therefore weakened.

Give us a greater longing for your healing and a deeper commitment to forgiving love.

Help us, Lord: **to love one another**

Loving God, wherever tangled political situations seem impossible to solve, wherever conflicting interests threaten peace; wherever the ears of the powerful remain insulated against the cries of the oppressed; give us ears to hear your guidance.

We think particularly this week of the arguments between Jersey and France; the people of Hong Kong and China; the people of Burma and the military dictatorship; the peace and reconciliation process in Northern Ireland.

Help us, Lord: **to love one another**

Loving God, wherever the ill and injured need comfort and assistance; wherever the elderly and housebound sit each day for hours alone; may we bring your love and help.

We think particularly this week of the people of India, desperately struggling with another wave of Covid. We pray for the people of Mexico after their bridge collapse. We pray for those for whom the unlocking of our country brings anxiety not relief.

Help us, Lord: **to love one another**

Loving God, wherever families are dysfunctional, or children are in danger; wherever the daily living conditions are damaging to health and self-respect; let your kingdom come.

And so we pray for those for whom Covid has meant living in closer conditions with an abuser; for those who's homes are not fit for habitation but are powerless to make their landlord act. We pray for all to be valued for the people God sees them as.

Help us, Lord: **to love one another**

Loving God, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

We pray together as Jesus taught us: Our Father

Hymn: The Lord's My Shepherd (StF 481)

Blessing:

The Lord bless us and keep us: the Lord make his face to shine upon us, and be gracious to us; the Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace. Amen.

Reflection by Rev Jenny Ellis, taken from 'A Word In Time', Methodist Church website

Prayers compiled by Rev Barbara Evans-Routley