

Hailsham Methodist Church
Worship at Home
Sunday 31st January 2021

Opening Prayer

We are called to recognise God's authority and to submit to it in every area of our lives. Let us invite God to direct our thinking and our prayers. Let us give God the highest place in our lives. Let us worship the living God.

Hymn: All Hail The Power Of Jesu's Name (StF 342)

Prayer of Adoration

Holy God, stronger than evil, your praise endures forever.

Good God, we remember your wonderful deeds: overcoming chaos to make a world ordered and intricate, from atom to star, your pattern is stamped on creation.

Good God, we remember your wonderful deeds: setting enslaved people free, and making them your own, bringing them home, when they were lured away.

Good God, we remember your wonderful deeds: facing down Satan in the desert, and expelling his followers, stilling the storm and quieting the sea.

Good God, we remember your wonderful deeds: sharing our pain through Jesus, in Jesus entering death's deep shadow, from which you raised him up.

Good God, we remember your wonderful deeds: washing away our divisions with the flood of your Spirit, consuming our prejudice with the fire of judgement.

Good God, we remember your wonderful deeds: we are your people, you are our God. As you stand against evil, may we stand with you.

Holy God, stronger than evil, your praise endures forever.

Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Let us confess our sins to God:

For our foolishness and our thoughtless use of the gifts of your creation: Lord, have mercy.

For our neglect of you, and our failure to care for others: Christ, have mercy.

For our selfishness in prayer, and our carelessness in worship: Lord, have mercy.

Hear the good news: "The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." Go in peace, for Christ forgives you, renews you, and by His Spirit, enables you to begin again. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Old Testament Reading: Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Hymn: God Has Spoken By His Prophets (StF 157)

Gospel Reading: Mark 1:21-28

Reflection: *"They were astounded at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one having authority and not as the scribes." (v.22)*

Capernaum, a small fishing village with a population of about 1,500, became the headquarters of Jesus's ministry. It was on the east-west trade route and had a toll station. Jesus, as a pious Jew, used to head to the synagogue on the Sabbath and teach the crowds. They were amazed because the tone of his teaching was very different compared to that of the scribes to whom they were accustomed. Scribes had knowledge of the law derived from careful study and cited sources. Jesus' authority seemed to be coming from first-hand experience, from an inner authority not derived from external sources. Jesus' style of preaching set him apart from the scribes. This is an early indication of the tension that was to arise between Jesus and the scribes. Jesus also stood out from the scribes in that his actions seemed to directly embody and convey power to accomplish his purpose and teaching. It astonished those who saw it.

In our reading today from Mark's Gospel, Jesus's first act of healing is an exorcism. Jesus was taking on cosmic forces of evil: those transcendent forces that attack people and institutions from within. The demon names and identifies Jesus as the 'Holy One of God' which may be a synonym for 'Son of God'. 'Naming' is a technique to control the opponent in battle. The demon senses Jesus's power to destroy it and questions why Jesus should want to interfere with its powers. The demon's message is stay clear! What have we to do with each other? Part of Jesus' mission in bringing the Kingdom of God to visibility is to defeat evil

spirits, but the combat is costly for both. It is not so much Jesus' 'teaching ideas' that are at stake, but who Jesus is, in embodying the teaching that is the threat to the demons. Jesus acts decisively. Without calling on any external authority or power he silences the demon and breaks its power. Jesus' word has direct power. Just as God's word accomplishes its purpose.

To Ponder:

Describe an occasion when you had a teacher whose words seemed to directly speak to your heart and change you from inside out. What short- and long-term effect did it have upon you?

Why is it so difficult to directly confront 'evil' in a person, institution or in our community life?

Can you think of a story in which prophetic action was effective because someone was acting out of direct experience and embodying something of the answer?

Hymn: Father, Hear The Prayer We Offer (StF 518)

Prayers of Intercession

God of our impressionable world, we pray for the leaders of the nations, that they would be wise, just and compassionate as they exercise their authority.

We remember especially those in power in Russia – and those protesting at the imprisonment of Alexei Navalny. We remember the governments in the Netherlands, in the United States, and here in the UK, praying for all leaders – in government, medicine and science - as they discern the way forward amid the difficult social and economic challenges of the pandemic.

May your truth be known, and your love be shared in Jesus' name.

We pray for the Health Services of our District, for medical officers and advisors, for medical teams in hospitals, surgeries and vaccination centres. We pray for a smooth and just rolling out of vaccine programmes, for those who are vulnerable, for those who mistrust the vaccine, for those for whom it has come too late. We pray for the families and friends of – and all ministering to – the dying and the bereaved.

May your truth be known, and your love be shared in Jesus' name.

We pray for those who feel overwhelmed by the additional pressures of home schooling, for those whose relationships are at breaking point. We pray for those who have lost their lives to depression, and for their families and friends. We pray too for those whose lives are blighted by anxiety and stress. We pray for the health services and charities trying to support them.

May your truth be known, and your love be shared in Jesus' name.

We pray for your church – around the world and in our own community, we pray for creative ways to serve and to share, for courage and integrity as we listen and pray, for urgency and daring as we respond to the needs around us.

May your truth be known, and your love be shared in Jesus' name.

We pray, in a moment of silence, for all those on our hearts and for all those who have no one to name them in prayer.

May your truth be known, and your love be shared in Jesus' name.

The Lord's Prayer

We pray together as Jesus taught us: Our Father

Hymn: There Is A Redeemer (StF 338)

Blessing:

Almighty God, be with us this week. Meet with us each morning, and in every situation throughout the day, whoever we are with. Help us to draw on your strength and wisdom, that we may be faithful and true in following the example and pattern given to us by Jesus.

And so may the blessing of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us all, now and for evermore. Amen.

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

Prayers compiled by Rev David Hinchliffe, Chair of the South East District of the Methodist Church