

Christ Church Woodley 11th July 2021

Call to worship:

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. - *Philippians 2:9-11*

We also acknowledge his love, his grace, his power to heal and mercies that endure forever Amen

We shall sing of his goodness for what he has achieved for humankind –

The vaccines, gradual restoration of life, the restoration of worship. He deserves our praise.

Hymn StF 65 SING OF THE LORD'S GOODNESS <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLMDEN8Y5f0>

- 1 Sing of the Lord's goodness, Father of all wisdom,
come to him and bless his name.
Mercy he has shown us, his love is for ever,
faithful to the end of days.
*Come then, all you nations,
sing of your Lord's goodness,
melodies of praise and thanks to God.
Ring out the Lord's glory,
praise him with your music,
worship him and bless his name.*
- 2 Power he has wielded, honour is his garment,
risen from the snares of death.
His word he has spoken, one bread he has broken,
new life he now gives to all.
- 3 Courage in our darkness, comfort in our sorrow,
Spirit of our God most high ;
solace for the weary, pardon for the sinner,
splendour of the living God.
- 4 Praise him with your singing, praise him with the trumpet,
praise God with the lute and harp ;
praise him with the cymbals, praise him with your dancing,
praise God till the end of days.

Ernest Sands (b.1949)

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Almighty God, throughout the ages you have guided your people through the wilderness, through wars, famine and now through Covid 19 pandemic. Your assurance has always been that you are with us. Throughout all time, you have been with your people in the seasons of life. You have out of your grace, given us the precious gift of creation, the gift of life, the gift of redemption, and the assurance that we shall rule with your Son in your Kingdom. We are grateful for your presence – here - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – that you have shown us the way of life and faith. We join with your churches and holy angels to bring you praise, adoration and extol your name. You are Holy, you are omnipotent, you are sovereign and mighty.

We are grateful that we are able to come together to worship you and to praise you.

But Father, we freely admit our shortcomings, you created us in flesh and weakness and we fall short of your expectation. We have failed to be good stewards of your creation. We have hurt loved ones and failed to share your love. We have not been the beatitude people that you wanted us to be.

Compassionate God, wash us in your grace. Renew us in your love. Equip us with courage and strength to be the followers of Christ. Infuse us with your Holy Spirit so that Christ will be the centre in our lives. We acknowledge the presence of your Holy Spirit among us this morning – here and in our homes. May He rise above our worship and sanctify us in the precious blood shed on Calvary and make this worship acceptable to you. Amen

Shall we join in the **Lord's Prayer**

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

Shall we hear from **Messy Church**.

Messy Church Hymn Who put the colours in the rainbow

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPQzzdvwKs8>

Who put the colours in the rainbow?
Who put the salt into the sea?
Who put the cold in the snowflake?
Who made you and me?
Who put the hump upon the camel?
Who put the neck on the giraffe?
Who put the tail upon the monkey?
Who made hyenas laugh?
Who made whales and snails and quails?
Who made hogs and dogs and frogs?
Who made bats and rats and cats?
Who made everything?

Who put the gold into the sunshine?
Who put the sparkle in the stars?
Who put the silver in the moonlight?
Who made Earth and Mars?
Who put the scent into the roses?
Who taught the honey bee to dance?
Who put the tree inside the acorn?
It surely can't be chance!
Who made seas and leaves and trees?
Who made snow and winds that blow?
Who made streams and rivers flow?
God made all of these!

Our Bible readings are coming from the book of Mark. The focus is on Jesus healing many.

Reading Mark 1:29-45

Jesus Heals Many

²⁹ As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. ³⁰ Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. ³¹ So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

³² That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. ³³ The whole town gathered at the door, ³⁴ and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

Jesus Prays in a Solitary Place

³⁵ Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. ³⁶ Simon and his companions went to look for him, ³⁷ and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

³⁸ Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." ³⁹ So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Jesus Heals a Man With Leprosy

⁴⁰ A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

⁴¹ Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

⁴³ Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: ⁴⁴ "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." ⁴⁵ Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

Reading: Mark 6:1-6 A Prophet Without Honor

⁶ Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ² When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

"Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?" ³ Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.

⁴ Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home." ⁵ He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶ He was amazed at their lack of faith.

It is God who sustains us and heals us. It is God who opens the way for vaccines to heal the nations.
We cannot measure how he heals so many.

Hymn StF 655 WE CANNOT MEASURE <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrNoQisGbDw>

- 1 We cannot measure how you heal
or answer every sufferer's prayer,
yet we believe your grace responds
where faith and doubt unite to care.
Your hands, though bloodied on the cross,
survive to hold and heal and warn,
to carry all through death to life
and cradle children yet unborn.
- 2 The pain that will not go away,
the guilt that clings from things long past,
the fear of what the future holds,
are present as if meant to last.
But present too is love which tends
the hurt we never hoped to find,
the private agonies inside,
the memories that haunt the mind.
- 3 So some have come who need your help
and some have come to make amends
as hands which shaped and saved the world
are present in the touch of friends.
Lord, let your Spirit meet us here
to mend the body, mind, and soul,
to disentangle peace from pain
and make your broken people whole.

SERMON

Somebody explained to me that there is a big difference between historical and historic events. Apparently, when a significant event happens and belongs to the past and no longer belongs to the present, then it is historical. But when something happens and continues to change the events that follow afterwards, and becomes a lasting importance then it becomes historic. You can see how I would struggle with these words. Covid 19 could qualify to be a historic catastrophic event, the way it has changed how we worship, how way we work, how we live, socialize, how we parted with our love ones who were departing. And the advice to the public was isolate and for Christians it was - fight on our knees. A year ago, the only thing we clung to was hope. It is said a person can survive for over 40 days without food and 8 days without water and 4-8 mins without air but to survive without hope is difficult and yet that was all that we had a year ago. Isn't it a miracle that so many have had a job in this country?

At Jesus time, life was short because cure for illness was limited and hope of surviving after a serious illness was dim. Then came on the scene, a man who healed instantly, he was not a specialist consultant on any particular illness, he healed every kind of illness. He charged nothing, prescribed nothing and healed instantly.

Peter recalls the day Jesus came for lunch in his house and his street was filled with people seeking healing. Our Lord had to come out and he healed them all till late night. If contemplatively you were in this queue with a friend or relative who was not well, what will be your immediate response when it came to your turn to be in the presence of Jesus? He is not a specialized consultant, he treats blindness, mental health issues, paralytic, dermatological diseases including leprosy, deafness, dumbness, arthritis, back pain - you name it, is simply Amazing, using his voice, his touch – will he do the same for me? Yes He is Lord over all, and what he has done for others, he will do for you. It comes to your turn; he speaks to you – a new life you receive! The way Mark describes it was dramatic and amazement. A magnificent eureka moment of hope brought to the helpless.

Jesus left the house early the following morning to go and pray and by the time Peter and Andrew got up, the street was filled again with more people seeking healing. That is the essence of hope – it becomes the only light in the darkness. But, unfortunately, Jesus was nowhere to be found. They sent a search party looking for Jesus. He had become the only hope for the people who were dying.

When they found him, they said to him everybody is looking for you. You would expect that with such success the night before, Jesus will be pleased and plan to build a church immediately. Instead he was sad about it, because he had to bring the Kingdom of God to the people so that the Holy Spirit could start his work through the church and time was limited. He replied, let's go to another town so that I can preach the Word of God there.

On their way another dramatic incident took place, a man came and knelt before Jesus and said to him "If you are willing you can make me clean". We all know how serious it was to breach covid 19 lockdown rules. But here is a man, who should be wearing a mouth mask over his lower lips to indicate that he is a leper. He had to keep 50 feet away from people and he was required to shout "unclean, unclean" if anybody approached him. Here he was a few inches from Jesus. If you were there what will you do? Ask the disciple to move the leper away so that he does not touch Jesus? The one who knows no sin, should not be made unclean! Touching a leper, a dead body or demoniac will mean Jesus will have to isolate for 7 days according to the law of Leviticus. But this man would have been one of many people sent by the priest to go home and pack their bags and leave their home, their family, friends and business and go and live outside the city in isolation until they die. Well, Jesus replies immediately "I am willing, I will touch you and make you clean". "Jesus had compassion on him" – this could also be translated as Jesus was angry – not with the man - but with his condition. Horrifying scene this is! But before you could say anything, a new man was standing before Jesus. A handsome man, the hairs fully restored, the skin with no blemish, his moustache and his smile. Indeed, Jesus is Lord over all! He speaks and the storms obey him, the trees hear his voice, the demons flee, the dead rise and diseases vanish. He is the true Son of the living God. *Vera Deo* (Truly God). This man was charged not to mention this to any one otherwise all the lepers would come to the city but he became a disobedient evangelist and told everybody.

Let's now fast forward to the visit to his hometown Nazareth. He goes to the Synagogue and teaches and explains the fulfilment of prophecy in him. Again, the people of Nazareth were amazed at his teaching. Where did he get this knowledge from? He does not have Rabbinic training? Is he not the *tectron* (carpenter)! They reacted with anger and insult. By custom, a person will be referred to as son/daughter of Mr So and So. Timeus is the son of Mr Timeus so we call him Bartimeus and Narbas is the son of Mr Narbas so we call him Barnabas. Why is Jesus being addressed as the son of Mary? It was not meant to be credit to Mary but insult to Jesus. They shouted "*sacharon, sacharon, this is sacharon*" – sarcastic, sarcastic, they shouted! And they became physical with him!

This is the dividing line in our world. Those who adore him as God and those who disregard or hate him. Historians and archaeologist digging in Capernaum have found a house close to the Synagogue in Capernaum and the walls are covered with religious graffiti about healing dating back to 1st century. They believe that was Peter's house which became a church in the 1st century. They have done similar digging in Nazareth and the earliest church dates back to the 4th century (400 years after the death of Jesus) because of their unbelief.

How do you recognise Jesus? A *sacharon*? Or a saviour and Lord over all! Is he your hope to eternal life? Is he your healer? Does his death on the cross have significance to you? Are you waiting to see him again?

May our faith be renewed in him and acknowledge him as Lord and Saviour of all. Amen

Hymn STF 18 BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lheJPRzAKyg>

- 1 Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.
- 2 I am the Lord who saves and heals.
I am the Lord who saves and heals.
I am the Lord who saves and heals.
- 3 In you, O Lord, I put my trust.
In you, O Lord, I put my trust.
In you, O Lord, I put my trust.

Anonymous
Based on Psalm 46:10-11

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION (Jon Skeet):

God of Good News, we pray for your Church.

We remember the work of all the prophets through history, boldly speaking the truth of your glory. We ask for discernment, that we may understand your love better, and for courage to witness to others. We remember those who face persecution for that witness, and ask for your strength in their hearts.

God of truth, speak to us and through us.

God of all creation, we pray for your world.

We think of difficult situations around the globe, and lift them to you. As the pandemic continues to rage, we ask for your wisdom at a global scale, that countries may act in the best interests of all people.

We see the effects of climate change devastate communities through extreme weather events and creeping but persistent changes. May our reactions be guided by you, moving beyond shock into action.

We think about areas where injustice, poverty, inequality and violence are common, and your presence can seem hard to find. May we work to make that presence felt, as force for real change.

God of strength, act in us and through us.

God of our lives and communities, we pray for those close to us.

We think of all the ways our families, friends and local communities are affected by the pandemic, whether through physical health, mental health, financial concerns or lack of social contact. As rules change, help us remember those who want to go faster, and those who are nervous we may be going too fast. Help to remind us that each individual is valued and different.

We remember health issues beyond Covid, and pray for those who are ill. We give thanks for all who work in health care, and pray for your healing to be shown through their work.

We remember those who have died, and those who mourn them. We pray for your comfort and strength.

God of compassion, show your love to us and through us.

Amen

Hymn STF 186 TELL OUT MY SOUL <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srkfvhANW7Y>

- 1 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord !
Unnumbered blessings, give my spirit voice ;
tender to me the promise of his word ;
in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.
- 2 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his name !
Make known his might, the deeds his arm has done ;
his mercy sure, from age to age the same ;
his holy name — the Lord, the Mighty One.
- 3 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might !
Powers and dominions lay their glory by ;
proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.
- 4 Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word !
Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure.
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord
to children's children and for evermore !

Timothy Dudley-Smith (b.1926)
Based on the *Magnificat*

BLESSING

God of creation, may we see the truth of your majesty all around us. God of salvation, may we feel the truth of your grace in our hearts. God of revelation, may we witness to your truth through the work of the Spirit. May God bless every one of us, and may we feel that blessing upon us, now and forever.

The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord lift his face towards you and may his peace be with you now and ever more. Amen