



Sunday 3rd January 2021

Dear friends,

If you have the Internet, you will find a video to accompany this sheet on YouTube from Sunday morning – search for Isle of Man Methodist Church and you will find it on our YouTube channel.

As many of our churches are entering into the time when they have their Covenant services, we will be using the Covenant prayer as part of our MMAST service this week - this service is therefore spread over 4 sides of A4 instead of the usual 2.

Our prayers are with you all,

Isle of Man Methodist Staff Team

Opening Prayer

Glory to the Father, the God of love, who created us; who continually preserves and sustains us; who has loved us with an everlasting love, and given us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

Blessèd be God for ever.

Glory to Jesus Christ our Saviour, who, though he was rich,

yet for our sake became poor, and was tested in every way as we are, yet without sin; who proclaimed the good news of the kingdom, and was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross; who was raised from the dead and is alive for ever, and has opened the kingdom of heaven to all who trust in him; who is seated at God’s right hand in glory, and will come to be our judge.

Blessèd be God for ever.

Glory to the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, by whom we are born into the family of God, and made members of the body of Christ; whose witness confirms us; whose wisdom teaches us; whose power enables us; who will do for us more than we can ask or think.

Blessèd be God for ever.

To the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be praise and glory for ever. **Amen.**

Hymn: Great is Thy Faithfulness (StF 51)

Sing/ Read /pray / the words below

- 1 Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father, there is no shadow of turning with thee; thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not; as thou hast been thou for ever wilt be:

*Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided.
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.*

- 2 Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest, sun, moon and stars in their courses above, join with all nature in manifold witness to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love:
- 3 Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth, thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide; strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow, blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Today’s Readings:

Isaiah 58:1-12

Matthew 5:13-20

Find a Bible and read the above passages. If you do not have a Bible at home, ask your local minister who will gladly source one for you.

A time of reflection

There is a very popular video on YouTube entitled “why I hate religion but love Jesus”

Hate is a bit of a strong word, but there are many sentiments expressed in it that I agree with...

When our religion becomes a stumbling block to our faith, and the faith of others...

When our practice of expected experience and tradition prevents the free move of the Spirit of God...

When our respectable Christianity leads us to expect others to conform to our way of being rather than allowing ourselves to be conformed and transformed to be truly Christ-like...THEN I too hate religion.

In Hebrews 11:1 we are told faith is the “assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”.

This faith, this assurance can only come from one thing – our living relationship with the Living God.

Religion, on the other hand, is the main focus of the reading from Isaiah as we have the Israelites complaining to God that He seems silent to them

‘Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?’ (v3)

The answer is given in the preceding verse –

“Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practised righteousness”

Those two words “as if” cut to the core of what this passage is about - these are people who are going to worship, doing the right rituals, sacrificing, fasting, seeking God...BUT they are not practicing righteousness...they are practicing religion.

God’s judgement is not on their religious practises per se, but rather that the practise and routine of these things have taken priority over the faith of the people.

The people had fallen into a trap that is always a danger when faith becomes religion – they focussed on the institution and believed that by following the custom of regular worship, fasting and sacrifice, that was all that God required of them.

What God seems to be objecting too so strongly about their worship was the fact that it was being offered by people who had opted out of doing the other things that God needed to have done.

There is nothing to suggest that God was objecting because their worship was sub-standard.

The objection is that when the faith expressed in the worship is not being put into practice in the people’s relationships with one another in the rest of their lives, then that worship is an act of hypocrisy and hypocrisy makes God sick.

Elsewhere in Isaiah, God says, “When you stretch out your hands in prayer, all I can see is the blood on your hands, so I turn away in disgust.”

When people of righteousness become people of self-righteousness and religion, we find that we are the salt that has lost it’s flavour. We are being of no benefit to society around us. We are being of no benefit to the Kingdom of God.

We have a living God who wants to be involved with all our lives. What we do in worship is just one facet of the Christian life.

When our relationship with God is secure and grounded on giving Him priority in our entire lives; not just honouring Him with our lips, but with our actions also...

When we come daily to the cross and say “Jesus, take me as I am, change me to the person you want me to be, and use me for your glory...” THEN

our light shall break forth like the dawn,
and our healing shall spring up quickly;
our vindicator shall go before us,
the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard.
9 Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, “Here I am”

Thanks be to God.

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Hymn: Jesus Christ - Perfect Love (StF 325)

Sing/ Read /pray / the words below

**1 Jesus Christ -- Perfect Love,
Holy One that knows no fault,
screen my thoughts, make me clean,
know the motives of my heart.
When I see my selfish choice,**

**when I glimpse your holiness,
then I realise again
Perfect Love has come to cleanse.**

**2 Jesus Christ -- Lord for all,
plant in me the kingdom seed.
Search me, Lord, when I'm found
looking only to my needs.
When I see the way you lived,
how you dignified the poor,
then I realise again
how I need to know you more.**

**3 Jesus Christ -- Lamb of God,
Love resolved to take our place.
Who can write or describe
all of your self-giving grace?
When I look at the brutal cross,
innocence and beauty slain,
that's when I realise once more
you fully understand our pain.**

**4 Jesus Christ -- King of heaven,
qualified to wear the crown.
In your face, radiant grace
draws us closer to your throne.
When we see your generous heart,
when we touch the world you love,
that's when we realise again;
Perfect Love is Perfect Hope.**

Geraldine Latty (b. 1963) and busbee

Renewing our Covenant with God

God made a covenant with the people of Israel, calling them to be a holy nation, chosen to bear witness to his steadfast love by finding delight in the law.

The covenant was renewed in Jesus Christ our Lord, in his life, work, death and resurrection. In him all people may be set free from sin and its power, and united in love and obedience.
In this covenant God promises us new life in Christ. For our part we promise to live no longer for ourselves but for God.

We come, therefore to renew the covenant which bound them and binds us to God.

Let us first seek forgiveness for the sin by which we have denied God's claim upon us.

God of mercy, hear us as we confess our sins.
For the sin that has made us slow to learn from Christ,
reluctant to follow him,
and afraid to bear the cross:

Lord, have mercy,
Lord, forgive.

For the sin that has caused the poverty of our worship,
the formality and selfishness of our prayers,
our neglect of fellowship and the means of grace,
and our hesitating witness for Christ:

Lord, have mercy,
Lord, forgive.

For the sin that has led us to misuse your gifts,
evade our responsibilities,
and fail to be good stewards of your creation:

Lord, have mercy,
Lord, forgive.

For the sin that has made us unwilling to overcome evil with good,
tolerant of injustice,

quick to condemn,
and selfish in sharing your love with others:

Lord, have mercy,
Lord, forgive.

Silence

**Have mercy on me, O God,
in your constant love;
in the fullness of your mercy
blot out my offences.
Wash away all my guilt,
and cleanse me from my sin.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
Give me the joy of your help again
and strengthen me with a willing spirit.**

If we confess our sins,
God is faithful and just,
and will forgive our sins,
and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
Therefore to all who truly repent
this is his gracious word:
'Your sins are forgiven.'
Amen. Thanks be to God.

Hymn: Come, let us use the grace divine (MWB)
Sing/ Read /pray / the words below:

Come, let us use the grace divine,
And all, with one accord,
In a perpetual cov'nant join
Ourselves to Christ the Lord:

Give up ourselves, through Jesu's power,
His name to glorify;
And promise, in this sacred hour,
For God to live and die.

The cov'nant we this moment make
Be ever kept in mind:
We will no more our God forsake,
Or cast his words behind.

We never will throw off his fear
Who hears our solemn vow;
And if thou art well pleased to hear,
Come down, and meet us now.

To each the cov'nant blood apply,
Which takes our sins away;
And register our names on high,
And keep us to that day.

The Covenant Prayer

Beloved in Christ,
let us again claim for ourselves
this covenant which God has made with his people,
and take upon us the yoke of Christ.

This means that we are content
that he appoint us our place and work,
and that he himself be our reward.

Christ has many services to be done:
some are easy, others are difficult;
some bring honour, others bring reproach;
some are suitable to our natural inclinations and
material interests,
others are contrary to both;
in some we may please Christ and please ourselves;
in others we cannot please Christ except by denying
ourselves.
Yet the power to do all these things is given to us in
Christ, who strengthens us.

Therefore let us make this covenant of God our own.
Let us give ourselves to him,
trusting in his promises and relying on his grace.

Lord God, holy Father,
since you have called us through Christ
to share in this gracious covenant,
we take upon ourselves with joy the yoke of
obedience and, for love of you,
engage ourselves to seek and do your perfect will.
We are no longer our own but yours.

**I am no longer my own but yours.
Put me to what you will,
rank me with whom you will;
put me to doing,
put me to suffering;
let me be employed for you
or laid aside for you,
exalted for you
or brought low for you;
let me be full,
let me be empty,
let me have all things,
let me have nothing;
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things
to your pleasure and disposal.**

**And now, glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
you are mine and I am yours.
So be it.
And the covenant now made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven.
Amen.**

As we have entered this covenant not for ourselves
alone, but as God's servants and witnesses, let us
pray for the Church and for the world.

Loving God, hear us as we pray for your holy catholic
Church:
make us all one, that the world may believe.

Inspire and lead all who govern and hold authority in
the nations of the world:
establish justice and peace among all people.

Have compassion on all who suffer from any sickness,
grief or trouble:
deliver them from their distress.

We praise you for all your saints who have entered
your eternal glory:
bring us all to share in your heavenly kingdom.

**Let us pray in silence for our own needs and for
those of others . . .
Silence**

Lord our God,
you have helped us by your grace
to make these prayers.
Answer now your servants' prayers
according to their needs;
in this world grant that we may truly know you,
and in the world to come
graciously give us eternal life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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,
The power, and the glory,
For ever and ever. Amen.*

A prayer of blessing

In the storms of life,
and the uncertainties which may come,
take heart - Jesus is with you.
take courage – He is calling you on
take bold steps – and live for His glory.

The blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and always.
Amen.

