

Worshipping Together

West Sussex Coast and Downs Circuit

November 1st – 22nd 2020



As the pandemic continues, we are very aware that many of you do not yet feel ready or safe to attend face to face worship. We are also aware that some of you were unable to attend physically gathered worship pre-lockdown but have felt included in new ways through the worshipping opportunities offered over the past months.

Worshipping Together is an offering from the circuit to you, and has been collated by local preachers, ministers and worship leaders from across the circuit.

If you are well enough, we invite you use this resource each week, at a time to suit you, and spend a few moments with God, knowing that you are **Worshipping Together** with other people who are also sharing in this act of worship with you.

Share these resources with others to use in their own way as we worship and grow together despite the limitations of social distancing.

Available at: www.westsussexcoastanddownscircuit.co.uk

Connect Together via Telephone or zoom webcam

Worship based on material in **Worshipping Together** will be led on Sundays at 9am from the comfort of your own home via the gift of telephone and/or zoom, led by Rev Dan Balsdon and team. Anyone from across the circuit is welcome. If you have any questions, please to get in touch with Rev Dan 01243 823895 | dan.balsdon@methodist.org.uk

The Methodist Church

Together

Connect via **phone** or **zoom** to start your Sunday Morning gathering **together** for a live, reflective service of Christian Worship

Sundays at 9am

Contact us for Phone or Zoom login details
Email: bogfelwest@gmail.com Tel: 01243 823895



@BognorRegisMethodist
@FelphamMethodist
@WestergateMethodist



Brought to you by Methodists
in Bognor Regis, Felpham
and Westergate.

Join Via Telephone

1. Call one of the Dial in by phone numbers from a mobile or landline.
0203 481 5237 UK 0203 481 5240 UK
0203 901 7895 UK 0131 460 1196
0203 051 2874 UK
2. Enter the meeting ID,. For **Together** this is **878 7997 8475** and press #
3. (optional) You will be offered opportunity to add a participant ID, you can skip this step by pressing #
4. Enter the meeting password. For **Together** this is **473352**

Please Note: the cost of the call will be equivalent to your standard rate as per your telephone bill.

Telephone Controls when in a call.

Get the attention of the host by pressing * 9

Mute/Unmute by pressing * 6

Join Via Zoom

Meeting ID **878 7997 8475** Password **473352**

Evening Worship on zoom

Weekly evening Worship at 6pm on Sundays with Rev Ian Suttie, Circuit Superintendent.

All Welcome

Zoom details

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83449113281?pwd=SHVWUzN6eENsMytuUG9KWitvUE1qdz09>

Meeting ID: 834 4911 3281

Passcode: 940041



As we come to worship, you may like to have a time of silence and light a candle. Let us remember that wherever we are, God is with us.

Gathering

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

Psalm 139:14

Prayer of thanks and praise

Lord, as we come together, though physically apart, on this All Saints day,
we echo the praises of those who have gone before us.

We are indeed wonderfully made for you are our Maker and our beloved Parent.
You have made us in such a way that we have become worthy to join all those
who have gone before us in that great congregation of saints in Heaven.

We, through the love of Jesus,
have been turned from sinners into your congregation of saints here on earth.
We thank you that whatever we do, we will always remain worthy of your love
for that is the promise you have given us through Jesus.
So we sing your praises and give you our thanks for this amazing gift of life forever.

Amen.

*Sing, read, pray, or proclaim – O Lord my God!*²

O LORD MY GOD! when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed:

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;

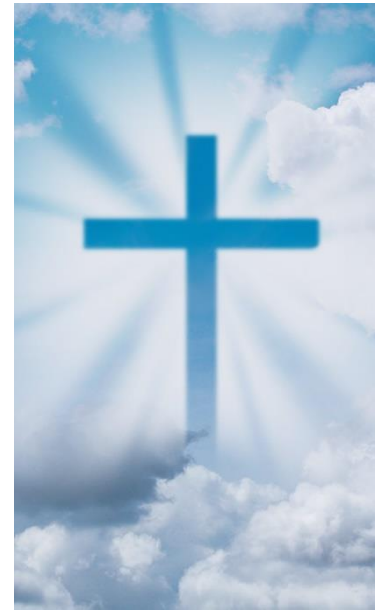
¹ Preparation and original material by Lynne James

² How Great Thou Art, © 1953 Stuart K Hine, Kingsway, Songs of Fellowship 425

When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
And hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze;

And when I think that God His Son not sparing,
Sent Him to die—I scarce can take it in.
That on the cross my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin:

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home—what joy shall fill my heart!
Then shall I bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!



RECEIVING

Reading: Matthew 5:1-12

Reflect

There are some great speeches that stay in our memories. Who said, 'I have a dream'? Who said, "England expects every man to do his duty"? These were speeches that made a difference. They helped people to change history and they inspired people to do great things. They were about making changes and giving your life for those changes. This speech, or collection of speeches, on the Mount is also about making changes, transforming our lives, acts of courage, righting wrongs. We've got it all right here in Matthew 5.

Who said 'Blessed are the pure in heart'? Who said 'blessed are the peacemakers'? Many people could answer those questions even though they have never read the Bible. The Beatitudes are probably the best-known bits of the whole Bible. Each part of this first section of the Sermon on the Mount should be as well known to Christians as their own name. For they are crucial to our understanding of what it means to be a Christian. And yet they are difficult to put into action. Jesus is trying to tell his disciples how they should live now that they have been transformed, permanently changed because of their personal relationship with God. So, he lists the things that will make them happy, as they make God happy. It's tempting to see this collection of teachings as a set of rules and regulations, a new law for Christians to replace the old law of Moses. The way Matthew sets it out makes us think that this is what he himself believed. The Mount was probably some quiet place just out

in the hill country, away from the crowds, so that Jesus could talk to his little band of disciples. The sermon was most likely a series of talks, some to the disciples and some perhaps to the crowd who managed to follow him anyway and tagged on to the disciples. Matthew, by making it one Sermon on the Mount, has given it the same authority as the giving of the law by Moses on Mount Sinai. So the idea is born that this teaching is about a new set of rules, a new law. However, the minute we think of it this way, we begin to misunderstand all the teaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God in Matthew chapters 5-7....

What is a law? It stops us from doing what we want. It protects the innocent from the guilty. It restricts our freedom. It stops us being exploited. It restrains. It defends. Choose a side. It all depends on your point of view and whether you're on the blunt end or the sharp end of the law at the time! The law protects the rich property owner who wants to use his land for a tourist development, as long as he can prove the land is his. The law should equally protect the poor family who want to grow crops on their land, provided they can prove the land is theirs. Sometimes it isn't easy to prove things when you're poor, and so sometimes the law seems to be on the side of the rich. One thing I'm sure we can agree on is that laws are based on the way the majority of people can reasonably be expected to behave. As some behaviour has become more acceptable to the majority, laws have changed. It's no longer a hanging offence to collect firewood on the queen's land and even shooting her deer won't get you hung or deported any more. Yet right now we probably won't be allowed to spend Christmas with our families. The law is currently restraining us for our own safety.

So if we think of the Sermon on the Mount as being a set of laws, we will think it restrains, or defends, depending on our point of view. Yet it is not a restrictive law, it is an ethic which frees us. Most laws are based on a consensus between the majorities in any society. This so-called law asks us to be different from the majority. It even asks us frequently to do the impossible. Its requirements are not the kind that anyone could stick to just by being part of the law-abiding majority. It was in fact never intended for that majority. Jesus gave these sermons to his disciples, not to the general public who still didn't understand what he was really about.

So what does all this have to do with us, the ordinary, everyday type of person who's struggling to be a good Christian and bring justice to the world where we can?

Why and how does Jesus expect us to live with this strange new ethic of freedom if it's impossible? The standard it sets is too high. It cannot be met in our own power. That is the key to understanding all the teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. It's all dependent on our relationship with God. We can't change the world on our own, but our actions can help when we are part of a group. We can't be a perfect Christian on our own either, but if we call on God and join his group then we can make it all work, together, in HIS power.

The Sermon on the Mount is not a set of restrictive rules or excuses for running away. It isn't a political manifesto for some party of social reform. It is a standard Jesus sets us to live by, But Jesus also taught that the way was hard. That does not mean that we should in any way give up trying to follow where Jesus leads. Because Jesus also taught that we did not have to walk this hard path alone. His words free us by acknowledging our failure, by using that failure to lead us on and into the kingdom. Jesus forgave us in advance for failing. In our failings we learn that humility which is so important to a disciple. In our failings we learn to ask for forgiveness. In our failings we come to see the enormous gulf between us and God. And in the confession of our failings, and in God's forgiveness, we learn of the bridge between us crossing that gulf; the love of God, his grace and mercy shown in Jesus.

So failure, confession, forgiveness and grace build that right relationship between God and us. That's what the Beatitudes are all about.

RESPONDING

Sing, read, pray, or proclaim – And Can it Be³

1) AND CAN IT BE that I should gain An interest in the Saviour's blood? Died He for me, who caused His pain? For me, who Him to death pursued? Amazing love! How can it be That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?	2) 'Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies: Who can explore His strange design? In vain the first-born seraph tries To sound the depths of love divine! 'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore, Let angel minds inquire no more.
---	--

³ And Can it be, Charles Wesley, StF345

3) He left His Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace;
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, it found out me.

4) Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

5) No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

Prayers of Intercession

We offer prayers for the people and places which are on our hearts at this time.....

Heavenly Father, we bring you these prayers in the certain knowledge that you are listening and that you will act to bring peace and hope where at present there is none. We pray for all those suffering in so many different ways from the effects of Covid 19 on their own lives and the lives of all across your planet. We pray that a vaccine will be found to free us from this plague and to allow us to be together as families and communities once more, across the whole world. We pray that the world will learn from what has happened and that leaders will listen to all those who speak of changes to protect our homes and our planet as climate changes bring fire and floods in so many different parts of the world. Help us to find a way forward to a world where differences of race and creed can be put aside and where we can preach your love without fear of persecution.

We bring together all our intercessions, spoken or unspoken, in the words of the prayer Jesus taught us:

The Lord's Prayer: *Our Father*

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all forever more. Amen



As we come to worship, you may first like to have a period of quiet.

Gathering words

“At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them”

We gather today, like every Sunday, to praise God and to worship his Holy Name. But on this Sunday, we also come to give thanks for all who have died that we may live, for all who have endured pain that we may know joy and for all who endured imprisonment that we might know freedom .

*Sing, read, pray or proclaim – **By the monument of marble**⁵*

1) By the monument of marble,
Or a simple wooden cross,
Here we gather to remember,
Sacrifice and tragic loss.
Blood-red poppy petals flutter
Each a symbol for life,
Drifting in a crimson curtain,
Shadow of our constant strife.

2) Solemn silence now surrounds us,
As we stand in memory.
Why must factions stir up conflict?
This eternal mystery troubles hearts
and stirs up the conscience,
Urges us to think again:
Faces the curse of confrontation,
Yet reduce this searing pain.

3) For the sound of war still thunders
Through our planet, on this day.
Every hour new victims suffer
Even as we meet to pray.
God, we need your help and guidance
In our constant search for peace.
Move us on to new solutions
As we pray that wars may cease.

Now Let us come together in prayer.

Loving God, we thank you for everything you have provided for us through Jesus Christ, for the beauty of our world and for all the gifts that you have given us.

⁴ Preparation and original material by Malcolm Lindo

⁵ By the monument of marble, Marjorie Dobson, Singing the Faith 131

Gifts which we can use to bring love and happiness to those around us and to bring conflicts between nations and peoples to an end. But we confess, O God, that we have been selfish with those gifts, we have chosen to use them in ways that reduce life rather than enhance it. Help us, Lord, to remember that Jesus commanded us to love one another.

In silence, we now offer our personal confessions of how we have failed.....

Loving Father, forgive us.....

Lord, we thank you this morning, that we know that our sins are forgiven.

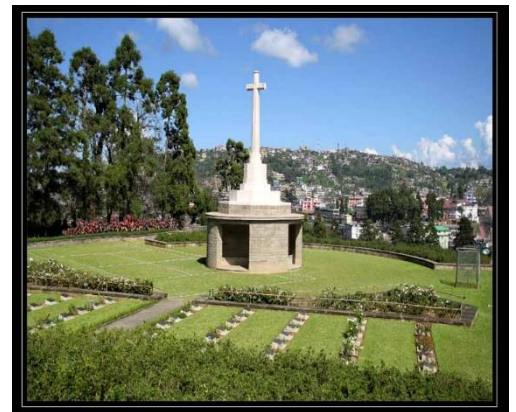
Amen

RECEIVING

Reflect

In 480BC, a small army of 7,000 Spartans tried to defend their country against an invading Persian army of over 100,000 men. Even though they fought bravely, they were heavily defeated. As a consequence, a monument was placed on the site of the battle, which recorded a message to anyone who read it ... “Stranger, tell the Spartans that we behaved as they would wish us to, and are buried here.”.

Centuries later, an inscription on a monument in the British War cemetery at Kohima in North India echoed the same sentiment , with the words : “When you go home, tell them of us and say: for your tomorrow, we gave our today.”



So today, we remember and give thanks for all who gave their lives in two World Wars and in the many conflicts since then. But perhaps today, we should also be remembering other people. People who have also given or are giving something of their lives so others can benefit. If so, then this morning, we should be remembering not only people like my Uncle Les, Gunner L.A Whiteman, 27th Searchlight regiment, Royal Artillery who was killed in Tobruk on 2nd December 1942, but also people like my niece Lucy who today is on duty as a Sister in a A&E Department in a hospital near Slough.

All of them have and are “behaving as we would wish them to do”. They are using the gifts that God has given them to ensure that our lives are better.

So how do we remember them and what they did or are doing for us? Buying a poppy once a year or for a few weeks clapping on a Thursday night doesn't seem enough .

Two thousand years ago, Paul reminded the young church in Rome that Jesus had died for them, that He had suffered death on a Cross so that they might inherit eternal life. So let us read what Paul told that young church how they should remember.

Reading: Romans 12:1-2 & 14-21

So, this morning, as we remember those who have died and those who are working to ensure our tomorrows, let us embrace the love of God. Let us, follow Paul's instructions, *"if you see your enemy hungry, buy that person lunch.....Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"*.

RESPONDING

Sing, read, pray, or proclaim - Song: Beauty for Brokenness⁶

1) Beauty for brokenness

Hope for despair

Lord, in your suffering world

This is our prayer

Bread for the children

Justice, joy, peace

Sunrise to sunset

Your kingdom increase!

God of the poor

Friend of the weak

Give us compassion we pray

Melt our cold hearts

Let tears fall like rain

Come, change our love

From a spark to a flame

2) Shelter for fragile lives

Cures for their ills

Work for the craftsman

Trade for their skills

Land for the dispossessed

Rights for the weak

Voices to plead the cause

Of those who can't speak

3) Refuge from cruel wars

Havens from fear

Cities for sanctuary

Freedoms to share

Peace to the killing-fields

Scorched earth to green

Christ for the bitterness

His cross for the pain

⁶ Beauty for Brokenness, Graham Kendrick, StF693

4) Rest for the ravaged earth
Oceans and streams
Plundered and poisoned
Our future, our dreams
Lord, end our madness
Carelessness, greed
Make us content with
The things that we need
God of the poor etc

5) Lighten our darkness
Breathe on this flame
Until your justice
Burns brightly again
Until the nations
Learn of your ways
Seek your salvation
And bring you their praise
God of the poor etc.

Prayers for ourselves and others

Loving God, we pray for all the places where there is conflict and disagreements. Whether it be a nation, or simply individuals, pour out Your Love so that people will listen to each other, will respect one another, and see those on the other side of the argument as equals with valid points of view.

We thank you, healing God, for the care that we receive from all who work in surgeries, hospitals and in the communities. We pray that all who seek to heal and comfort may find the strength and desire to continue in their work.

Loving God, we pray for all who are in need and cry out in pain, especially, we pray for our families, our friends, and for the members of our Churches.

Silence (or name out loud those you specially wish to pray for)

Lord, You have given us so many gifts, so many talents, and so many opportunities. So, we pray, that you will help us, individually and as your people together, to use what we have been given to be your witnesses in the world. Amen

The Lord's Prayer: *Our Father*

Blessing

Go now with joy and a smile to walk with Him every step along our way.

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all now and evermore. Amen**



As we come to worship, you may first like to have a period of quiet and then have a coin ready to reflect on later in the Service.

Gathering Words | 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11

For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that whether we are awake or sleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up.

Sing, read, pray, or proclaim: There is a Redeemer⁸

1) There is a Redeemer

Jesus, God's own Son

Precious Lamb of God, Messiah

Holy One

2) Jesus my Redeemer

Name above all names

Precious Lamb of God, Messiah

O, for sinners slain

Thank you, O my Father

For giving us Your Son

And leaving Your Spirit

Till the work on Earth is done

3) When I stand in Glory

I will see his face

And there I'll serve my King forever

In that holy place

Prayer of Adoration

We praise you, eternal God for the world which you have created and for our place in it. **May you be praised for ever and ever.**

You have given us life that we may love and serve you even though we have resisted your purpose and misused your gift.

You have not left us in our sin,

but have sent your Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour.

May you be praised for ever and ever.

We thank you that for us he became human

died on the cross, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven

where he reigns in glory and prays for us.

May you be praised for ever and ever.

⁷ Preparation and original material by Joyce Stroud

⁸ There is a redeemer, Melody Green & Keith Green, StF338

We thank you that you have sent your Holy Spirit to bring us to freedom and to new life in Christ.

May you be praised for ever and ever.

**We dedicate ourselves to you
strengthen us by your spirit to do your will
and bring us with all your saints
to the glory of your kingdom
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**



We share in the prayer that Jesus taught us.

The Lord's Prayer: *Our Father...*

RECEIVING

Scripture Reading: Matthew 25: 14-20

Reflection

Today's Gospel reading is one that maybe very familiar but opinions vary on what it was meant to signify. Is it about money or skills? Are the heroes the two that doubled their money or the one that rebelled and buried their talent in the ground?

In one view of the story, the person who buries the talent is thought to represent the Pharisees who do not want to see any change as they might lose their position in society. They had the knowledge of the word of God and consequent power but were not using it for the good of the people and were refusing to recognise Jesus for who He was. The people with the five and the two talents are thought to represent those who have recognised Jesus as the Son of God and their lives have been turned around because of it.

In many parables, the master represents God but in this story the master is shown to be untrustworthy. Therefore, it seems unlikely that the master is God. There are some views that the third slave who buries the treasure is reacting to the injustice of the master. Perhaps he buries it so that the master cannot benefit from it. We can ask ourselves how we respond to injustice. Is it sufficient just to point it out and not to take any action? Earlier in Matthew's Gospel we read the parables of the tenants and the wedding banquet. One of the key messages from those is the need to change behaviour in response to God's grace, to repent and make a new start.

We are called to use whatever gifts we have for the service of God and for those around us. Whatever we feel we have achieved there is always more to do, more to learn. The ones with the five and two talents were given more than they were expected to be able to use and they rose to the challenge. It is important to use the resources we have to the best of our ability and not to be afraid of having high expectations about what the Holy Spirit can enable us to do.

The skills we have can diminish if not used. A pianist or a golfer needs to practice to keep up their skills. To stay closer to Jesus we need to keep practicing works of compassion so that they become second nature.

In the next part of the chapter there is the parable of the Sheep and the Goats where the behaviour that is commended is that of those who have given food and drink or clothes to those in need as if they were directly looking after Jesus. Acts of mercy do not have to depend on wealth but in freely sharing what we have received. Often the most generous people are those with the least material possessions.

The story of the talents was a warning that Israel needed to make use of her privilege and responsibility as God's people. Jesus was looking for justice and found corruption, people were planting vineyards and not sharing the crop with those in need.

Do we sometimes take the easy way out, like the one who buried the talent in the ground? Do we speak out for justice or stay quiet to avoid rocking the boat? Does fear of the possible consequences prevent us from action? One of the readings set for today is from 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 where Paul is reminding his readers to encourage each other in their faith. Let us be ready to support each other and to be open to use the talents we have been given to glorify God.

RESPONDING

*Sing, read, pray, or proclaim – **Where can we find you**⁹*

1) Where can we find you, Lord Jesus our Master?

We want to serve you, to answer your call.

Where do you lead us and ask us to follow?

What should we do in our service to all?

⁹ Where can we find you, Allan Charles Dickson, StF672

2) Go to the hungry to those who have nothing
Go where the farmlands are empty and bare
I broke the bread for the people around me
Out of my plenty, think what you can share.

3) Go to the homeless to those who have nowhere
Go where my people sleep out in the rain
I had no comforts but what others gave me
Offer them shelter, give ease to their pain.

4) Go to the outcast to those who have no-one
Go where my sheep are rejected and lost
I dined with sinners and reached out to lepers
Go and do likewise and don't count the cost.

5) Where will we find you, Lord Jesus our Master?
We are your servants who answer your call
You go before us and there we will follow
Taking our cross in the service of all.



Prayers for ourselves and others¹⁰

We pray to God who is always ready –

For those overtaken with demands, **Give rest, O Lord**

For those overburdened with anxieties, **Give rest, O Lord**

For those overcome with debt, **Give relief, O Lord**

For those oppressed by powers that despise them, **Give salvation, O Lord**

For those in situations where they feel trapped, **Give freedom, O Lord**

For those in despair, **Give hope, O Lord**

God of readiness, you are always ready to show care,

Give us readiness so that we can be quick to show kindness and happy to help.

We bring these prayers in the name of Jesus our Saviour and Lord. **Amen**

Blessing

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ keep you & those you love,
today and in the week ahead. Amen.**

¹⁰ Roots for Churches Ltd



As we come to worship, you may like to have a time of silence and light a candle. Let us remember that wherever we are, God is with us.

Adoration and Confession¹²

Worship God with the morning sunrise,
lift your voice in the evening rain.
Bring your thanks and praise, all your accolades to him.
Clap your hands to the God who loves you.
Sing your song to the one who saves.
Trust his promises, know that you are his always!

But even as words of praise pass my lips
I know that I have not always lived
as one who is loved, forgiven and set free.

I have allowed myself to be imprisoned by tradition,
captivated by habit, limited by fear.

Through your healing power of love made flesh make me whole
to live and love with an open heart and generous spirit. Amen



RECEIVING

Scripture Readings: Gospel - Matthew 25 vs 31-46
 Old Testament - Ezekiel 34 vs 11-16 20-24

Reflection

Are you someone who prepares well for everything?

It might be a special occasion when plans are needed to be made weeks, months or even years ahead. It might be your work schedule – things that need to be done by a certain date, jobs that are done regularly on a particular day. It could just be your life in general – you like to know what is happening when so that you can plan so that there won't be any nasty surprises.

Or are you someone who likes to just see how things work out.

You know that the best laid plans are often disrupted so it's best to just let things happen and deal with any problems as they occur.

¹¹ preparation and Original material by Shelagh Morgan.

¹² Includes extract from Singing the Faith #68 by Geraldine Latty (b1963)

If you read from the beginning of Matthew 25 you will see that the earlier verses include the parable of the ten virgins where the bridesmaids ran out of oil so missed the wedding, and the parable of the talents where the slave wasted his chance of increasing his one talent while the master was away. These people were unprepared.

And then we come to the familiar passage about the sheep and goats. The people hearing it would easily be able to identify with the illustration Jesus is using. Sheep and goats would regularly graze together during the day, but they needed to be separated at night so that the goats can be kept warm – they are less hardy than sheep. It's often quite difficult to tell them apart. Look at the photographs below and decide which is the sheep and which is the goat (*the answer is at the end of this act of worship!*).



In Jesus' teaching the sheep and the goats have more in common than we might first think – they both ask the question 'Lord when did we do this?'

The parables, and this illustration, are about being prepared and then being judged. The people in the stories make their judgements. The bridesmaids decide there is no great rush. The slave with one talent decides to do nothing, and the goats decide that some people are not worth bothering about. God then makes his judgement and, unfortunately for them, it is completely different from theirs.

Justice is something which humans long for. It is hard to define and harder still to put into practice; but that has never stopped human beings and societies seeking it, praying for it, and working to find ways of doing it better. And 'justice' doesn't simply mean punishing wickedness. It means bringing the world back into balance. All the people standing at the throne of glory are taken aback by God's judgement. They were not prepared to see the Son of Man up there on the throne. Both groups – the sheep and the goats were puzzled. They are both unprepared for this standard of judgement. The reading from Ezekiel shows God himself looking for the lost sheep and longing to care for them. It also shows God's judgement on those 'fat sheep' who kept the pasture for themselves and deliberately pushed away the

hungry and the needy. Any well brought-up Jew listening to Jesus would recognise the justice of the judgement handed out to the goats.

How do we relate this teaching to our lives today? Most of us have had to amend any plans we may have had over the last six months because of the impact of Covid-19. You may be reading this because you cannot attend worship due to the current restrictions. People in leadership roles in the churches have had to plan in detail for each act of worship or meeting which takes place on the premises. Amidst all the bad there has been a great deal of good. We have seen stories on our televisions, read articles in our newspapers, witnessed acts locally which have reminded us time and time again that we all have the opportunity to care for those less fortunate than ourselves. We know that both young and old are experiencing loneliness. We know that many people have either lost their jobs or are being paid considerably less than they were 12 months ago and so are experiencing financial hardship. We know that this is a global pandemic with the poorer nations and the thousands living in refugee camps suffering more than we can imagine. Whatever our personal circumstances we can all do something. We can pray every day. We can give gifts of money to organisations who are working with those who are suffering. We can ring someone who is on their own and have a friendly chat. We can offer encouragement to individuals who are doing what they can to keep people safe whilst they go about their daily lives. You will be able to think of other things you can do. Our acts of kindness, support, encouragement must not end with the pandemic – they must be a daily part of our discipleship. When we are judged we will not have to ask the question ‘when did I do that?’

RESPONDING

Prayer: COME LORD JESUS¹³

Lord Jesus, you are the king who comes in, you come into the place where we are. Into our world. Into our church. Into our homes. Into our hearts.

You come as least expected.

You come to unsettle the complacent and unseat the unjust.

You come whether we want you to come or not.

But today we invite you to come.

Into our world. Into our church. Into our homes. Into our hearts. Come Lord Jesus.

¹³ Wild Goose Publications, Bare Feet and Buttercups

Your kingdom is for those who are poor,
and we ask that you would come to the poor today
and give them your wealth. Come Lord Jesus.

Your kingdom is for those who mourn,
and we ask that you would come to them today
and give them your comfort. Come Lord Jesus.

Your kingdom is for those who are hungry and thirsty
to see justice and right in the world,
and we ask that you would come to them today
and satisfy their longings. Come Lord Jesus.

Your kingdom is for the peacemakers
in homes, in churches, in nations,
and we ask that you would come to them today
and reward them with the knowledge
that they are your children. Come Lord Jesus.



Come Lord Jesus today:

To those who are sick and sad – come

To those who are healthy and glad – come

To those taking great decisions – come

To those giving birth – come. To those making music – come

To those making war – come. To those still in bed – come

To those still at work – come.

You are the king and life holds together when you are here,
so finally we say: Come Lord Jesus.

The Lord's Prayer: *Our Father...*

*Sing, read, pray or proclaim - **Song: Where can we find you**¹⁴*

1. Where can we find you, Lord Jesus our Master?
We want to serve you, to answer your call.
Where do you lead us and ask us to follow?
What should we do in our service to all?

¹⁴ Where can we find you, Allan Charles Dickinson (b.1954) StF no.672

2. Go to the hungry, to those who have nothing,
go where the farmlands are empty and bare.
I broke the bread for the people around me;
out of my plenty, think what you can share.
3. Go to the homeless, to those who have nowhere;
go where my people sleep out in the rain.
I had no comforts but what others gave me;
offer them shelter, give ease to their pain.
4. Go to the outcast, to those who have no-one;
go where my sheep are rejected and lost.
I dined with sinners and reached out to lepers;
go and do likewise, and don't count the cost.
5. Where will we find you, Lord Jesus our Master?
We are your servants who answer your call.
You go before us, and there we will follow,
taking our cross in the service of all.

Sending

I am the Body of Christ.

I will go and be hands reaching out to the needy and holding the friendless,

I will go and be feet walking the extra mile, striving for others.

I will go and be tongues chatting the good news, welcoming all.

I am the body of Christ. Praise God.



Answers: Photo 1 – goat Photo 2 - sheepp

Acknowledgements

Song words reproduced under CCLI Licence | formatting + editing by Rev Dan Balsdon

Bible texts from NRSV unless otherwise stated, www.biblegateway.com

Image reproduced under Creative Commons Licence unless otherwise stated