

Circuit At Home Service 27 9 20

Welcome and introduction

Welcome to our weekly Circuit service for those who are unable or not drawn to attend church. I'll begin with a few verses from Psalm 34, using the New Revised Standard version of the Bible for this and all today's readings.

Psalm 34, v 1 – 4 I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.

Hymn STF: 34 We sing a hymn that talks about coming to God just as we are with no pretence. It was written in C19th so works with a very masculine vocabulary for God, but still has a wonderful message for each one of us.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,
bow down before Him, his glory proclaim:
with gold of obedience and incense of lowliness,
kneel and adore him: the Lord is his name.

Low at his feet lay your burden of carefulness,
high on his heart he will bear it for you,
comfort your sorrows and answer your prayerfulness,
showing the pathway your feet should pursue.

Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness
of the poor wealth you would count as your own;
truth in its beauty and love in its tenderness,
these are the offerings to bring to his throne.

These, though we bring them in trembling and fearfulness,
he will accept for the name that is dear;
mornings of joy give for evenings of tearfulness,
trust for our trembling and hope for our fear.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,
bow down before Him, his glory proclaim:
with gold of obedience and incense of lowliness,
kneel and adore him: the Lord is his name.

John Samuel Bewley Monsell (1811-1875)

Looking around outside we can see that we are definitely coming into Autumn. The colours in the garden and the quality of the light are changing, the days are drawing in. All of this is signifying to the plants, animals and trees and to us that it is time to prepare for Winter. Autumn is about letting go of all the fullness and bounty of Spring and Summer, to prepare for the less abundant times of Winter. The flowers are still beautiful, but they are dropping flowers and not making as many buds. Many leaves are still on the trees, but they are changing colour and starting to fall, change, as always, is happening all around us.

I have been reading recently about the Japanese idea of Wabi Sabi, it is about finding joy and beauty in change and imperfection. Nothing is perfect, everything changes, nothing lasts forever, remembering this can be helpful when it comes to letting go.

Sometimes it is hard to let go, especially of things that are important, particularly good, almost perfect...but each one of us has had a lot of practise in letting go over the past few months through lockdown and it looks set to continue in the months to come. We have had to let go of our belief that we have control over our lives, in small things like coming and going from our homes as we wish, meeting friends, eating out to much bigger things like meeting family, visiting those who are elderly or unwell, saying goodbye to the dying and gathering to share memories and to grieve. There have been times of frustration, dark times, tears, but also new ways that turn out to be better ways, more time and space to reflect, more time with immediate family, which can be good or difficult, sometimes both at once. Time to think about how we want things to be in the future, changes we can make.

The Bible talks about this in the book of Ecclesiastes, in the OT, ch 3, v 1 – 8

Everything Has Its Time

1 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: 2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; 3 a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; 4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; 5 a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; 6a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; 7a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; 8a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

Prayers So we come to a time of prayer. Let's just be still for a moment and if you are near a window or able to see outside, what can you see of God's created world. Even in city streets we see the determination of creation to break into our world, buddleia growing in gutters, roots and weeds breaking through tarmac.

We give you praise and glory, Creator God for the wonder of your creation that we see around us. We give you praise and glory that you created each one of us in your image in a way we do not fully understand and that you desire to walk beside us whoever we are, wherever we are, whatever our life has been to this point.

We give you praise and glory for the lessons we can learn from your creation, how much you value and rejoice in diversity, all those colours green, all those shapes of leaf, all those shapes and sizes of people; how creation changes through the cycle of the seasons, how we can change and grow into our own fullness and beyond; how much beauty there is to see in everything around us.

Yet as we look at or think about your creation we know that we have not always learned the lessons you want us to and we have not always looked after your world in a way that is good for it and for all of humanity. Forgive us, God, for so often going our own ways; for doing what is right for ourselves or our group, without thought of others; for burying our heads in the sand in the face of the knowledge that all of us need to make changes for the good of creation, the whole of creation.

Pause

God sent Jesus to give us all a new chance, a clean slate, as many times as we need it, because God longs for us to change and to grow. So God says to each one of us, "Your sins are forgiven, go and try again." Amen

The set gospel reading for today seemed to fit well with the theme of letting go and changing that we are looking at, it is in Matthew's gospel, ch 21 and I am reading vs 28 – 32. It is set in the Temple in the last few days before the crucifixion of Jesus, the day after his triumphant ride into Jerusalem and the cleansing of the Temple of the money changers and traders. Jesus is teaching when the Chief priest and elders of the Temple come to speak to him

Reading **Matthew 21, v 28 - 32**

Reflection Jesus is saying to the chief priest and the elders that God is not interested in who we are, what our position in life is, how much money or power we have. God is not even interested in our words, be they ever so good and pious and correct. God is only interested in our hearts and what we do.

The chief priest and elders very quickly saw that the son who did what their father wanted was not the one who said he would do it, but the one who actually did it. For one of the sons it was just words to make him look good, but with no substance, nothing to back them up. The other speaks in haste or selfishness or laziness or whatever, but then regrets it and does what he was asked. The chief priest and the elders see this in the story, but cannot see that it applies to them.

Jesus tells them that John the Baptist had preached a message of repentance, of changing the way we act, a change of heart, a return to the way our loving God wants us to be loving to others, but the chief priest and the elders had not really heard his message. They had been so busy being scandalised that first John the Baptist and now Jesus are happy to mix with tax collectors and prostitutes, that they had largely been deaf to the message that John and then Jesus had brought.

The chief priest and the elders were so wrapped up in their own image, their own importance, that even when they saw tax collectors and prostitutes respond to John's message, they couldn't or wouldn't believe that his words were for them as well. And that can be us as well, can't it. It's an unavoidable fact that in order to change, to grow we have to let go of something of the way we are now, we cannot change and remain the same, it just doesn't work.

In order to grow more and more into the people God made us to be, we have to let go of some of the bits of us that won't fit any more. The chief priest and the elders would have had to let go of their feelings of superiority over tax collectors and prostitutes and accept that God made us all equal. We have to let go of whatever stops us from being the people God wants us to be, you, me, the President of Conference, the Archbishop of Canterbury, whoever, it's about letting go through our Autumn, biding our time through our Winter in order to grow anew in Spring, season after season after season. Amen

Intercessions A time of prayer now for our world, our communities, our loved ones, a time to bring to God that which is in our hearts.

When I say God hears our prayers, you might want to respond with me **Thanks be to God.**

God hears our prayers **Thanks be to God**

Loving God we pray for our world with so many places of devastation and destruction, so much of it caused by human beings. As I write fires are raging in California: the people of Beirut are trying

to envisage how to rebuild after the explosion: the people of Syria and many other places continue to live within the ruins of buildings and the ruin of lives caused by war; people in so many places are living with the impacts of climate chaos, floods, drought, typhoon, loss of life, loss of livelihood, loss of homes and for the whole world the Covid -19 pandemic brings loss and worry and uncertainty. Loving God in your name there is hope for the world, but you entrust that hope to we feeble and uncertain human beings, help us to draw from you the strength we need to carry your hope to the world.

God hears our prayers **Thanks be to God**

We pray for our communities, that new connections that have been made in lockdown will thrive and bear fruit in the months to come. We pray that our churches will continue to find new and exciting ways to be your witness to the world. We pray that you will open each one of us to be willing to change and to grow into the followers that you need at this time and in the place we find ourselves.

God hears our prayers **Thanks be to God**

WE pray for those we carry in our hearts who are in need of God's loving touch at this moment. Those who are unwell, those who are grieving, those who feel lost or in unending darkness, those who find it hard to carry on. God sees their need for healing, for peace, for light, for comfort and will respond. Let us name them in a moment of silence, placing them before God.

God hears our prayers **Thanks be to God.**

God has indeed heard each of our prayers and will respond to each one with love and understanding. Amen

We say the Lord's prayer together.

Hymn STF 503

Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven to earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion, pure unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.

Come almighty to deliver, let us all thy life receive,
Suddenly return and never, never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing, serve thee as thy hosts above,
Pray and praise thee without ceasing, glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation, perfectly restored in thee:
Changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love and praise.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Final prayer We turn from our worship to our everyday world, touched, changed by this time in God's presence, let us carry that light with us into the world. Loving God show us how we can share what you have given us. Amen.