

The Methodist Church of Gloucestershire

At Home Worship – 12th September 2021

This is the day that the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

Singing the Faith 86 –

Praise the Lord! Ye heaven's adore him

Praise him angels, in the height;
Sun and moon, rejoice before him;
Praise him, all ye stars of light.
Praise the Lord! for he has spoken;
Worlds his mighty voice obeyed;
Laws which never shall be broken
For their guidance he has made.

Praise the Lord! for he is glorious;
Never shall his promise fail;
God has made his saints victorious;
Sin and death shall not prevail.
Praise the God of our salvation!
Hosts on high his power proclaim;
Heaven, and earth, and all creation,
Laud and magnify his name.

Prayers

I calm myself in your presence my Lord and my God.

I acknowledge you to be with me this day,
Around me and within me.

I open my heart and my thoughts to your wonderful love
And I worship you Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

(silence)

Surround me with your love and, in my imperfection, may I know your healing.

In my failings may I know your forgiveness,

In my thoughtlessness may my life be renewed by thoughts of you.

I thank you for the love you have shown in Jesus,

I thank you for the new life that is mine through his resurrection,

I thank you for your Holy Spirit's guidance

May this time be your time as I focus who I am on you.

(silence)

Amen

Psalm 19

¹The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament^[a] proclaims his
handiwork.

²Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.

³There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;

⁴yet their voice^[b] goes out through all the
earth,

and their words to the end of the world.

In the heavens^[c] he has set a tent for the sun,

⁵which comes out like a bridegroom from his
wedding canopy,

and like a strong man runs its course with
joy.

⁶Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them;
and nothing is hid from its heat.

⁷The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul;

the decrees of the LORD are sure,
making wise the simple;

⁸the precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;

the commandment of the LORD is clear,
enlightening the eyes;

⁹ the fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the LORD are true
and righteous altogether.
¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey,
and drippings of the honeycomb.
¹¹ Moreover by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.
¹² But who can detect their errors?
Clear me from hidden faults.
¹³ Keep back your servant also from the

insolent;^[d]
do not let them have dominion over me.
Then I shall be blameless,
and innocent of great transgression.
¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the
meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Mark 8:27-38 New Revised Standard Version

²⁷ Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" ²⁸ And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." ²⁹ He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah."^[a] ³⁰ And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

³¹ Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

³⁴ He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel,^[b] will save it. ³⁶ For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷ Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸ Those who are ashamed of me and of my words^[c] in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Singing the Faith 462 – Come with me, come wander (https://youtu.be/MdFVsRAnA_o)

Come with me, come wander,
Come welcome the world,
Where strangers might smile
Or where stones may be hurled;
Come leave what you cling to,
Lay down what you clutch
And find, with hands empty,
That hearts can hold much.

Chorus

Sing Hey for the carpenter
Leaving his tools!
Sing Hey for the Pharisees
Leaving their rules!
Sing Hey for the fishermen

Leaving their nets!
Sing Hey for the people

Come walk in my company,
Come sleep by my side,
Come savour a lifestyle
With nothing to hide;
Come sit at my table
And eat with my friends,
Discovering that love
Which the world never ends.

Chorus

Come share in my laughter,
Come close to my fears,
Come find yourself washed
With the kiss of my tears;
Come stand close at hand
While I suffer and die,
And find in three days
How I never will lie.

Chorus

Come leave your possessions,
Come share out your treasure,
Come give and receive
Without method or measure;
Come loose every bond
That's restraining the spirit,
Enabling the earth
To be yours to inherit.

Chorus

– John L. Bell

Reflection

Once Jesus reveals to his disciples that his ministry will involve rejection and suffering Peter takes on the role of opposer. The figure of Satan in scripture shifts and changes over the ages but always plays the role of one who lays down a challenge to the ways of God. Whether it be in the form of a snake in the Garden of Eden, questioning God's instructions about the tree of good and evil; or the tempter in the wilderness trying to deflect Jesus from his true calling; or in the book of Revelation as an Angel of light seeking to usurp God's heavenly authority. And here we have Peter taking on the role as he suggests to Jesus that he somehow will be able to avoid the suffering that Jesus has said he will endure.

Jesus' response is to point out to Peter that his thoughts are human and not heavenly. And here, in this simple statement, is the full challenge of the spiritual life. How do we get our thoughts to be of God rather than of our earthly desires? It is a question that monks, mystics and indeed Methodists have lived and struggled with over the centuries. Indeed, what in popular culture has become known as the Seven Deadly Sins are really developed from the early church Mothers and Fathers' struggle with what they identified as eight *logosmoi*, or thoughts.

Jesus calls us to note these thoughts, to challenge ourselves and find ways of returning our minds and our souls to the Father. There are thousands of books written on this lifelong struggle but at the heart of our spiritual transformation is prayer; in all its forms. Our life's calling is to fill each waking moment with prayer, thoughts of God and meditation on scripture. As St. Paul tells us – pray constantly. This sounds like an overtly religious way of living, very pious, maybe to excess. That is until we consider the thoughts we are wrestling with. As the thoughts are all consuming so our focussing on God needs to be too; a giving up on the ways of the world in order to regain the very heart of who we are.

So here are the eight thoughts that classically consume the mind of humanity: Food, Sex, having Things, Anger, Dejection, Not being Bothered, Vainglory and Pride. They pretty much sum up all the problems we struggle with in life. We, the world, have become obsessed with these thoughts. Just think, how many cooking programmes there are, one of the biggest online industries is pornography, the western system runs on the constant need to buy and own more things, there is a pandemic of mental health problems in our schools, there is a disconnect from the needs of the poorest people across the planet, we all want our fifteen minutes of fame and for people to say how great we are and, if we're not putting ourselves down we're particularly good at thinking we are better than others.

Like his challenge to Peter, Jesus challenges us – we need to think of the ways of God, not of these earthly things. This begins not as you might think by refusing to have worldly thoughts but rather by being aware of them when they occur and then by replacing them with a prayer, a hymn, a bible story, a thought about the wonder of God’s creation.

Jesus tells us that to follow him means taking our own cross and suffering the rejection he is to endure. If we dare to challenge the dominant thinking of our world then we will begin to know how heavy that cross can be.

Prayers of Intercession

Loving Lord God, we hold before you the concerns of our hearts and minds.

We ask your blessing on your church in all it’s forms. Whether institutions or individuals may we reject the thinking of the world and turn our minds to your heavenly ways.

(silence)

We ask your blessing on those who hold authority in this world. May your Holy Spirit change their thoughts from the gathering of wealth and power and turn them to serving the needs of the poor.

(silence)

We ask your blessing on anyone who has so lost themselves to the world’s thinking that they despair. Be with them in their hurt, confusion, dejection and heal their thoughts to find satisfaction in you.

(silence)

We ask your blessing on those who are hurting in any way in body mind or spirit. Fill their lives with the strength of your love, enable them to bare the cross they carry.

(silence)

We ask these and all our prayers in the name of Jesus, by the power of the Spirit and to the Glory of Go the Father.

Amen

566 - Take my life and let it be (<https://youtu.be/Gf11rReeWIs>)

Take my life and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee.

Take my moments and my days;
let them flow in endless praise,

Take my hands and let them move
at the impulse of thy love.

Take my feet and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee,

Take my voice and let me sing
always, only, for my King.

Take my lips and let them be
filled with messages from thee,

Take my silver and my gold;
not a mite would I withhold.

Take my intellect and use
every power as thou shalt choose,

Take my will and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne,

Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee,

Blessing

Circle me Lord, keep satisfaction in, keep despair out.
Circle me Lord, keep humility in, keep pride out.
Circle me Lord, keep love within, keep hatred out.
Circle me Lord, may all my thoughts be yours,
In Jesus' name,
Amen