



30th August 2020

The **Methodist Church**

South Warwickshire Circuit

Registered charity no. 1154830

Superintendent Minister: Rev Dr Iain Ballard

***"If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves, and take up their cross and follow me."
(Mt 10:39)***

Warm greetings to you and welcome to this week's letter and printed service. As the church year draws to a close it's not difficult to put a finger on the dominating issue of the last 12 months. Many people have wisely reduced their intake of Coronavirus news. Too much can be bad for your mental health. Most of us have been affected in some way, directly or indirectly. It is easy to become weary of it, and of the measures we need to take as a result. So as we move into a new church year there are a couple of things we need to be particularly mindful of - our care for others, and our approach to worship.

My experience is that as we went into lockdown in March it brought out the best in people. Ok, sometimes also the worst, but by and large people offered to help others, do errands with good grace, get to know their neighbours better, willing to go the extra mile. Thankfully much of this has continued but there is a risk that as some aspects of normality return these little acts of kindness tumble down our list of priorities. So let us ensure we make that phone call, take a moment to check on our neighbour, be prepared to change our plans to help someone out. God's kingdom is not, and has never been, restricted to church buildings, but is present wherever people are in need.

The other area we need to pay attention to is our approach to worship. While a few churches are starting to offer gathered worship again, it's not the same as before, may not be appropriate for some and won't be to everyone's taste. As a result it's easy to fall out of the habit of worshipping, and our faith will suffer accordingly. Ironically, there are exciting alternatives, especially online, on tv and the radio. The variety there far exceeds what has been available in our church buildings. Yet even in our South Warwickshire churches creativity is breaking out! Prayer is being offered at Radford Road, reflections at Dale St, there are daily prayers on zoom, a new garden of hope is taking shape at Kenilworth and, a particular favourite of mine, outdoor worship at Mickleton in the 3Bs garden. Praise be!

Trevor Pethick, Circuit Steward.

Reminder: Dial – a – Prayer, Methodist Church

Listen to a prayer: 0808 281 2514

Listen to news: 0808 281 2478

Sunday Worship and Daily Prayers

There are plenty of opportunities to join in worship if you have the internet. We are encouraging everyone to link up with the live stream worship being offered by the Birmingham District via FaceBook on Sunday mornings at:

<https://www.facebook.com/Birminghammethodistdistrict/live>

Change of YouTube account:

Please note, the Circuit now has its own YouTube account (it's no longer piggy-backing off Peter's), which means that the URL has changed. Please access the YouTube video by clicking the following link or typing it into your browser:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLzyDSCOYMtQvpCroUvvxjE93MqkTWQomY>

In addition, we will be offering services online on the Circuit's own FaceBook page or via the Website:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SW.Methodist/>

Website: www.methodist-swc.org.uk

A full text of this service is available at this FaceBook link and on the website, and is being sent by post to all those people who do not use the Internet so they can join in too. These worship opportunities will be available and sent to you every Sunday. We will be offering worship in a similar way each Sunday as the health crisis continues.

Circuit Resource Centre, Wellesbourne Methodist Church, Bridge Street, Wellesbourne, CV35 9LR

www.methodist-swc.org.uk

m:07578 640013

e: swc.katetennyson@gmail.com

TV & radio opportunities for worship:

Radio 4, Sunday Worship, Sunday 8:10am,
Radio 4 Long Wave, Daily Service, 9.45am Mon-Fri,
Radio 3, Choral Evensong, Sunday 3pm.

BBC 1, Sunday Worship, Sunday 10.45am,
BBC 1, Songs of Praise, Sunday 1:15pm
(The times of the TV services can alter, please check the times)

Daily prayers at 10am are led by members of the circuit via zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/328494818> Please contact Michael Sharman on 07412 401988 if you'd like help getting in.

Pastoral Support

A reminder that if you are in pastoral need of any kind please contact your own Minister direct by email or phone. We may also be able to arrange practical help with shopping and so on. Our details are below.

If in any doubt, please contact Rev Dr Iain Ballard and he will link you up with help locally to you.

Rev Dr Iain Ballard	07368 875790	iain.ballard@methodist.org.uk
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Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying. With every blessing to you and yours.
The Ministers and Stewards of the South Warwickshire Methodist Circuit of Churches

Worship for 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Thank you to all who have been involved in preparing our worship: Gail Bullivant who brings us a reflection, Michael Sharman and Barbara Greenwood for the readings and Michael for choosing the songs, Jemima Howe and Trevor Pethick for preparing the prayers. Thank you also to Kate Tennyson for pulling it all together and Tim Pearson for editing the video which can be found on YouTube using the link in the letter above. If any of you would like to take part, then please get in touch with Barbara on barbara.greenwood@methodist.org.uk

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

Let us come to God with open hearts. Let us sing His praises. Let us kneel before Him with humility and bare our souls. Let us be joyful, thankful, grateful for the God of love is with us.

Hymn: StF 24 – Come now is the time to worship

Come, now is the time to worship.
Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship.
Come, just as you are before your God, come.

**One day every tongue
will confess you are God,
one day every knee will bow.
Still, the greatest treasure remains
for those who gladly choose you now.**

Come, now is the time to worship.
Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship.
Come, just as you are before your God, come.

Prayer of adoration

Loving and gracious God, we rejoice in your presence among us. You are the source of all that is good. You are the fountain of all love.

We praise you for the beauty of creation, which delights us, lifts our spirits, fills us with joy. We may not be able to sing our favourite hymns, yet the distinctive tunes of birdsong, the gentle rhythm of the wind in the trees and the gurgle of rivers all remind us of the music of nature.

We thank you for those around us, our family and friends, work colleagues and strangers in the street, who make our lives at once fulfilling and exasperating. But most of all we thank you for your Son, Jesus, who came into the world for us, lived for us, and died for us. When we turn from Him our lives lose meaning, but when we focus on Him our lives are filled with purpose. May we always turn towards your truth and light and become the disciples you want us to be. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Prayer of confession

Loving God, we confess that sometimes, like Peter, we become a stumbling block. Sometimes through ignorance we put obstacles in the way of your kingdom. At other times we deliberately act in an obstructive manner because it suits us, or makes life easier.

As painful as it is, we bring those occasions to you now, asking for your forgiveness. Give us the strength to act today in accordance with your kingdom, not against it, so that we may become beacons of light.

Hear the word of God. Our sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

Amen

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

1st Reading Jeremiah 15:15-21

(New Revised Standard Version)

¹⁵O Lord, you know;
remember me and visit me,
and bring down retribution for me on my
persecutors.

In your forbearance do not take me away;
know that on your account I suffer insult.

¹⁶Your words were found, and I ate them,
and your words became to me a joy
and the delight of my heart;

for I am called by your name,
O Lord, God of hosts.

¹⁷I did not sit in the company of merry-makers,
nor did I rejoice;
under the weight of your hand I sat alone,
for you had filled me with indignation.

¹⁸Why is my pain unceasing,
my wound incurable,
refusing to be healed?

Truly, you are to me like a deceitful brook,
like waters that fail.

¹⁹Therefore thus says the Lord:

If you turn back, I will take you back,
and you shall stand before me.

If you utter what is precious, and not what is
worthless,
you shall serve as my mouth.

It is they who will turn to you,
not you who will turn to them.

²⁰And I will make you to this people
a fortified wall of bronze;
they will fight against you,
but they shall not prevail over you,
for I am with you
to save you and deliver you,
says the Lord.

²¹I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked,
and redeem you from the grasp of the
ruthless.

Psalm Psalm 26:1-8

(New Revised Standard Version)

*Plea for Justice and Declaration of Righteousness
Of David.*

¹Vindicate me, O Lord,
for I have walked in my integrity,
and I have trusted in the Lord without
wavering.

²Prove me, O Lord, and try me;
test my heart and mind.

³For your steadfast love is before my eyes,
and I walk in faithfulness to you.

⁴I do not sit with the worthless,
nor do I consort with hypocrites;

⁵I hate the company of evildoers,
and will not sit with the wicked.

⁶I wash my hands in innocence,
and go around your altar, O Lord,

⁷singing aloud a song of thanksgiving,
and telling all your wondrous deeds.

⁸O Lord, I love the house in which you dwell,
and the place where your glory abides.

Epistle Romans 12:9-21

(New Revised Standard Version)

Marks of the True Christian

⁹Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast
to what is good; ¹⁰love one another with mutual
affection; outdo one another in showing honour.

¹¹Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the
Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering,
persevere in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of
the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do
not curse them. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice,
weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony

with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. ¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ¹⁸If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Gospel *Matthew 16:21-28*

(New Revised Standard Version)

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

²¹From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²²And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." ²³But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

The Cross and Self-Denial

²⁴Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. ²⁶For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

²⁷"For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. ²⁸Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not

taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Sermon

Jesus predicted his death by telling his disciples that he must "*go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders, chief priests and scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised*".

He further said to his disciples "*If any want to be my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?*"

Paul said "*Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good*".

The background to the message from scripture today is that Jesus was at the point when everything was going to be very different. His focus was different and his message was life changing and urgent. We know this from the very first words in this passage "From that time on Jesus began...." Jesus and his disciples were entering a phase of critical importance.

Remember friends, that our passage today follows Peter's glorious affirmation to his Lord - "You are the Christ". This would not have been something that Peter acknowledged on his own, the eleven other disciples would also have accepted this as truth. Hallelujah!

It was the time for Jesus' twelve disciples to fully understand that Jesus was the long-promised Messiah and it was also the time for them to understand exactly what Messiahship meant.

It is possible that for the twelve Messiahship would have meant unadulterated glory. Whilst Jesus was even telling them that he must undergo great suffering which would include

opposition and untold hardship that these for the disciples were things that Jesus would have to go through on the way to splendour and majesty.

Suffering for Jesus was an integral part of his Messiahship and Jesus had to push this point time and time again. Matthew 17: 22,23 *"The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised"*. Here we are told the disciples were "greatly distressed". Verse 20: 18,19 Jesus speaks to his disciples *"See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes and they will condemn him to death, then they will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified: and on the third day he will be raised"*.

The change of focus also had Jesus telling his disciples that *"he must go to Jerusalem"*.

In the gospel of Luke we have the words of Jesus *"Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed away from Jerusalem"* Luke 13 verse 33. Yes Jesus had to push this point many times.

Friends Jesus, the Messiah was on his way to the cross. The theologian Bonnard made the point that Jesus going to the cross had nothing to do with heroics or the opposition of Jesus' enemies or blind fate but was the plan of God.

Last Christmas on Christmas Eve I stayed with my 94 year old aunt and the determined effort that she made to get to Midnight Mass at the local church was something I had not expected. The reflection that evening was about the cross and the point that was made was that at the cross "it all went horribly wrong". My aunt who I thought was asleep looked at me and said "no, it went right". Friends, it was God's plan.

The next scene in our passage is Peter's response to Jesus' words. Peter the Rock not surprisingly

pulled Jesus to one side and actually tried to rebuke his Lord and Saviour. *"Never Lord, this shall not happen to you"*.

Here we have Peter assuming that he knew better than Jesus. He and his disciples did not want to accept what Jesus had said. This makes sense for Peter had just acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah it would be unthinkable that *"the Messiah the Son of the Living God should be rejected and killed"*.

There is something now that in this passage that I find quite amazing. We are told that after Peter tried to rebuke Jesus, Jesus turned to Peter. This means that he would have either had his back to Peter or was looking the other way. This was the divine action of Jesus quite rightly turning away from things that were not of God. Peter's words were not of God. When Jesus turned to Peter he put the words of Peter in their place *"Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things"*. Here we have evil's threatening presence weaving its way through the story, masked with a human face.

This is what Jesus requires in the name of his Father, setting our minds on divine things. Friends, what the world is surely crying out for now is to turn to the things of God and to turn away from the things of people. All those things that are a stumbling block to God. They need to be gone away with. This was why Jesus' rebuke to Peter was so strong *"Get behind me Satan!"*. This is a firm reminder from Jesus to us to set our hearts and minds on divine things only.

In our passage from Romans we have the message from Paul. A beautiful passage which can only help us to understand what Jesus means when he says we need to set out hearts and minds on divine things only.

At the beginning of verse 12 in Romans we have those incredible words *"I appeal to you brothers*

and sisters by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect”.

We now come to another life changing message from Jesus. *"If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?"*

I vividly remember preaching on this very early in my preaching days possibly around 20 years or so. I also remember vividly writing a very apologetic sermon. It concentrated on me trying to apologise for what Jesus was asking of us. When I think of that I feel that was a time I would like to forget but you know God keeps reminding me every now and then never to do that again.

Friends this is the good news! We are not denying ourselves we gain life, the right life, the Godly way. Our focus changes our thoughts change our purpose changes all us changes for we leave behind the old non Godly ways and step into a divine purpose. Denying ourselves is to stop being part of anything that is not of God.

After this reflection there will be a worship song called "Crowns". One of the lines in the song is "Yet his life was taken, so I was granted mine". The chorus is this:-

"My wealth is in the cross,
There is nothing more I want
Than just to know his love
My heart us set on Christ
And I will count all else as loss
The greatest of my crowns

Mean nothing to be now
For I've counted up the cost
And all my wealth is in the cross".

I very often use that first line and the fourth line if I am taking my eyes of Jesus, and lose focus., "My wealth is in the cross" and "My heart is set on Christ"

Jesus went on to tell his disciples that those who deny themselves will need to take up their cross. When we hear these words we can do no other than to picture Jesus on his way to Calvary already condemned, but there is someone else carrying his cross, Simon of Cyrene, required to carry Jesus' beam of execution to the place of execution. Cross bearing is an acknowledgement that disciples, followers of Jesus, may suffer or die for the Lord's sake.

I subscribe to a Christian newsletter and the reports are very often about the persecution and killings of Christians in Nigeria. In the last five years it is reported that over 11,000 Christians have lost their lives, killed and abducted.

Most of us will not have to carry our cross to death but we must remember those of our brothers and sisters who do. Discipleship for some will mean the loss of physical life but that loss has to be compared to the gaining of eternal life. Paul explained this perfectly "to live is Christ to die is gain".

Jesus said "For those who want to save their life will lose it". This is a stark warning. The good news though is that when we take Jesus into our lives the hope is that with Jesus help and guidance we will be able to get to the point where we can put ourselves to one side, we are still us but we can choose to put away all worldly things and to take the life that Jesus' offers and then we are found. There is another worship song called "You love me as you find me", the words are "I was found before I was lost, I was yours before I was not".

The song Crowns says "My heart is set on Christ, I will count all else as loss". This is our goal for the promise of Jesus is - *"And those who lose*

their life for my sake will find it". Three words there "for my sake". God's will not our own.

I just recently watched a very interesting programme about a village in Sussex which houses a community called the Brunderhof who bases their lives on the early church where all possessions are given up, no-one has money and they share everything they have. I'm not going to make any comment on the programme but there was one thing that was said by one of the members and he said "the reason this community works is because everyone has given up absolutely everything to follow Christ".

That made my heart melt for what an absolute message of hope.

When we start to take in the words of Jesus very often we then start to ask ourselves "well how can I do that". "How does this work how can I give my whole self to Christ". "How do I deny myself and take up my cross, how do I lose my life and gain it"! "Sometimes I may even have to do and say things that are at odds with this world and may not be current fashionable thinking".

God's thinking is different to worldly thinking which is why Jesus said to Peter "*Get behind me Satan*".

To follow Jesus we need to know what he requires of us, what is our purpose what is our mission.

Our passage from Romans, the words of Paul are a fantastic hope of how we are to endeavour to give our lives to Christ and to be Christlike. I encourage you today to read Romans 12.

"Let love be genuine: hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer". The words of Paul end in Chapter 12 with "*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good*".

All these things are only possible through Jesus Christ not only possible but promised.

Remember friends our wealth is in the cross and our eyes should be set on Christ and anything else would be a loss. The absolute certainty is that in Christ we win find our true purpose. Hallelujah friends! Praise the Lord. Amen.

Hymn: Crowns (*Hillsong Worship*)

**There is a hill I cherish
Where stood a precious tree
The emblem of Salvation
The gift of Calvary**

**How is it I should profit?
While He is crucified
Yet as His life was taken
So I was granted mine**

***My wealth is in the cross
There's nothing more I want
Than just to know His love
My heart is set on Christ
And I will count all else as loss
The greatest of my crowns
Mean nothing to me now
For I counted up the cost
And all my wealth is in the cross***

**I will not boast in riches
I have no pride in gold
But I will boast in Jesus
And in His Name alone**

***My wealth is in the cross
There's nothing more I want
Than just to know His love
My heart is set on Christ
And I will count all else as loss
The greatest of my crowns
Mean nothing to me now
For I counted up the cost
And all my wealth...***

THE RESPONSE

Prayers of thanksgiving

Prayers of thanksgiving (MWB 32)

Let us give thanks to God.

For the Love of our Father, the maker of all,
the giver of all good things:

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For the world's beauty and the changing seasons,
And for the life that we have been given:

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For Jesus Christ our Saviour,
Who lived and worked among us:

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For his suffering and death on the cross
and his resurrection to new life:

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God

For his rule over all things
And his presence in the world:

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For the Holy Spirit, the giver of life,
Who teaches and guides us:

Let us bless the Lord

Thanks be to God.

For the grace of the Spirit
In the work of the Church

And the life of the world:

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Prayers of intercession (Taken from roots on the web)

Lord God,
you reproached Peter because he had only
human concerns;

but Peter just wanted to protect the one he
loved.

We pray for people the world over
who find themselves in difficult situations.

We pray that they would all have someone
to care for them and lift them before you.

**Merciful God,
hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are persecuted for their
faith:

for all who are misunderstood,
for asylum seekers who flee real danger in their
homeland.

We pray for those who work tirelessly to address
wrongs.

**Merciful God,
hear our prayer.**

We pray for people whose lives don't always
work out right,
through their fault, or through no fault of their
own.

**Merciful God,
hear our prayer.**

We pray for the people in our lives
who need your protection, Lord,
that we will always be faithful in prayer for them.

**Merciful God,
hear our prayer. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

**The Lord's Prayer (slightly different words as it
will be prayed in sign language)**

**Dear Lord,
Our father who is in heaven
Honoured be, your Holy Name.
Your kingdom come and your will be done
Here on earth, as it is in heaven.**

**Dear Lord,
Please give us food today.
And forgive us, as we forgive others,**

**May your testing be, not too hard to bear
And deliver us, from the evil one.**

**Dear Lord,
Yours is the Kingdom
And the Power and the Glory.
Forever and forever, Amen.**

The Offering & prayer

Holy and Loving God,
We hold up our smallness to your greatness,
Our fear to your love,
our tiny act of giving to your great generosity.
And also we hold up ourselves to you.
In the name of Jesus Christ, your precious Son
and our Saviour.

Amen

THE DISMISSAL

Hymn: H&P 770 – Go forth and tell! O church of
God awake

- 1. Go forth and tell! O church of God, awake!
God's saving news to all the nations take.
Proclaim Christ Jesus, Saviour, Lord, and
king,
that all the world his worthy praise may
sing.**
- 2. Go forth and tell! God's love embraces all:
he will in grace respond to all who call.
How shall they call if they have never heard
the gracious invitation of his word?**
- 3. Go forth and tell! Some still in darkness lie:
in wealth or want, in sin they live and die.
Give us, O Lord, concern of heart and mind,
a love like yours which cares for all
mankind.**
- 4. Go forth and tell! The doors are open wide:
share God's good gifts with people long
denied.
Live out your life as Christ, your Lord, shall
choose,**

**your ransomed powers for his sole glory
use.**

Prayer & blessing

Let's say the grace together:

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