

Welshpool & Bro Hafren Methodist Circuit

Home Worship Sheet – 20th September

This short act of worship has been prepared and written for you by Rev Jacquie Evans.

Call to worship:

God calls the strong and the weak,
the grateful and the grumblers,
those who have much to give and those who have little.
And he calls us,
so come and worship the God
whose generosity is beyond words
and whose love binds us all together

Hymn: O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness

To listen to the hymn in a new tab: press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#).- Close the tab after the hymn.

- 1 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.
- 2 Low at his feet lay thy burden of carefulness,
high on his heart he will bear it for thee,
comfort thy sorrows, and answer thy prayerfulness,
guiding thy steps as may best for thee be.
- 3 Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness
of the poor wealth thou wouldst reckon as thine;
truth in its beauty, and love in its tenderness,
these are the offerings to lay on his shrine.
- 4 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.

**5 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)

Prayer:

**Almighty God,
we don't always know how we got to where we are,
and we certainly don't always know where we are going;
we don't always choose the right path,
and we certainly don't always follow it;
we don't always deal well with the struggles of life,
and we don't always give thanks for the joys of life either;
we don't always think of the effects that our choices
cause to others, near and far.
We are too often selfish,
wanting what we want no matter what the cost to others.
Almighty God, forgive us, reassure us
and cradle us within your forgiveness. Amen.**

A reading from Jonah 3:10 – 4:11

To listen to this reading, by David Suchet from BibleGateway in a new tab press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the reading.

**When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways,
he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had
threatened.**

**But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. He prayed
to the Lord, 'Isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is
what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a
gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love,
a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, Lord, take away my life,
for it is better for me to die than to live.'**

But the Lord replied, ‘Is it right for you to be angry?’

Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. Then the Lord God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah’s head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, ‘It would be better for me to die than to live.’

But God said to Jonah, ‘Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?’

‘It is,’ he said. ‘And I’m so angry I wish I were dead.’

But the Lord said, ‘You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left – and also many animals?’

A reading from Matthew 20:1 – 16

To listen to this reading, by David Suchet from BibleGateway in a new tab press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the reading.

For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the market-place doing nothing. He told them, “You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.” So they went.

He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, “Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?”

“Because no one has hired us,” they answered.

He said to them, “You also go and work in my vineyard.”

When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, “Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.”

The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. “These who were hired last worked only one hour,” they said, “and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.”

But he answered one of them, “I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?”

So the last will be first, and the first will be last.

New International Version

Reflection

There are two clear themes in this week’s service, the first is about equality and treating others in a way that we would expect to be treated, and the second is about being glad for what we have got.

Don’t we all love a good moan? Think of the weather, it’s too cold, too wet, too hot. When do you hear anyone say that the weather is perfect?

Our first reading this morning is from one of the great biblical moaners – Jonah. Have you ever noticed that he never seemed to be happy? This reading is in the context of the ancient city of Nineveh. Jonah is an unhappy prophet working there. He didn’t think that the Ninevehians were worth saving although God had other ideas. As a result of this he thought that what he was doing was a waste to time, and the verses in

chapter 4 demonstrate his frustration and anger when he has a good moan to God. But worse was to come, just when he thought that God was providing for him by giving him shade in the heat the bush is attacked by a worm overnight and Jonah gets angry again with God asking him why he was so angry.

Of course the big problem here was Jonah's idea that people were not worth saving. What would Jesus have made of this? He gave us many examples and how all people, no matter who they were, were precious in his sight.

Jesus also speaks to us of the grumbles and moans in life in the parable that he tell us. Again a familiar story, were inequalities are perceived in the pay that each labourer gets. Perhaps we should look at how this would appear to us if we were flies on the wall listening to the conversation: The labourers in the vineyard, again a very famous parable. It's one of those in which I can almost hear the voices, the mutterings and mumblings saying that the workers who came early are not being treated fairly. If it was the 1970's then they would probably go straight out on strike! Moan, moan, moan – does this sound familiar?

The context for this parable is Jesus' words at the close of the previous chapter: 'Many who are first will be last, and the last will be first' (19.30). Entitlement is a strange thing in the kingdom of heaven. There is a promise of gift beyond deserving, but there is also a whole new pattern that does not seem 'fair', according to normal human standards. The disciples were shocked, for instance, to discover that the rich were going to find it difficult to enter God's kingdom. How shocking it must have been to hear that wealth could be a spiritual handicap. Peter speaks up about the choice the disciples have made and the amount that they have given up to follow Jesus – surely their sacrifice will be recognised?

Work links our readings: Jonah isn't keen on his job as a prophet, and some of the workers in the vineyard complain about theirs. The life to which we are called doesn't always work out as we thought it would.

Today's readings stress God's generosity towards everyone, both Jews and Gentiles. God is portrayed as:

- Equally concerned for outsiders and insiders.
- More than fair, rewarding both the long faithful and latecomers.
- Wanting to speak with non-believers.
- Understanding of, but impatient with, human desire to protect dignity even at others' expense.

In this story, the vineyard symbolises Israel, and wine symbolises prosperity. The big vineyards relied on casual labour. The labourers relied on the work to feed their families. The complaint is not about the work, but that all are paid the same.

The parable shows that the reign of God upturns everything. The last are treated fairly — no one gets less than his due. The first are treated fairly — they get the full day's wage needed to feed their families. God behaves generously, but not unfairly.

I want to end with a reflection in the form of a short note to God:

How can this be?

If you love me so much,

how can you love her?

how can you love him?

If I am your special one -

surely they must be less special?

If I am worth your love -

surely they must be worth less?

If you died for me -

who died for them?

Perhaps your love is bigger than I thought.

Deeper than I could measure

if I had a line longer than here to the Sun!

Brighter than I could know

if the Sun came down to play!

Warmer than its fire, that melts the coldest heart.

So melt my heart, my loving God,

that I can love as you love,

and reflect a little of your light.

A TIME OF PRAYER

Prayer about generosity and true compassion

How good it feels to be generous or compassionate to someone!

What a sense of relief when someone is generous or compassionate towards me!

Yet how hard it can be to stand by and watch someone else being treated generously or compassionately!

'It's not fair!' springs all too readily to my mind if not my lips.

Generous and compassionate God, keep me from taking you for granted.

Forgive me for grudging others the treatment I want for myself.

Please fill me with your generous compassion.

Help me to allow your generous and compassionate Spirit to work in and through me day by day. **Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

**Generous God,
we pray for those trapped in cruel patterns of behaviour,
autocratic rulers and corrupt regimes.
Generous God, **make us generous too.****

**We pray for those who are exploited
by greedy employers and unfair working practices.
Generous God, **make us generous too.****

**We pray for those who struggle to survive
because of poverty brought about by sickness,
drought or because their land has been taken away.
Generous God, **make us generous too.****

**We pray for those who are left out
because for some reason or another,
they just don't fit.
Generous God, **make us generous too.****

We give thanks for all who have lived,
and loved, and made our lives all that it is today.
We give thanks for the generosity of their talents,
their love and their money.
Generous God, **make us generous too.**
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

Hymn: Now thank we all our God

To listen to the hymn in a new tab: press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#).- Close the tab after the hymn.

- 1 **Now thank we all our God,
with hearts and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done,
in whom this world rejoices;
who from our mothers' arms
has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.**

2 O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us;
and keep us in his grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills
in this world and the next..

3 All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given,
the Son, and him who reigns
with them in highest heaven,
the one eternal God,
whom earth and heaven adore,
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.

Martin Rinkart (1586–1649)

translated by Catherine Winkworth (1827–1878)

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BLESSING

Let us choose wisely Lord,
in all that we do this week,
in the decisions that we have to make.
May we be guided by your love,
in all that we think, say and do. **AMEN**