

Welshpool & Bro Hafren Methodist Circuit

Home Worship Sheet, 31st January

**This short act of worship has been prepared and written for
you by Kat Bond**

Call to worship - Isaiah 12:2-6

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

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my defence; he has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

In that day you will say:

'Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you.'

Over the past six services we have heard about Jesus' arrival here on Earth: His human birth in Bethlehem, - how as a tiny baby He was worshipped by wise men. We have seen Him being baptised by John in the River Jordan; we have heard Him calling people to repent, and we have listened to Him selecting a small, but varied, band of disciples to follow Him, and to join Him in his ministry . . .

Today, on this 4th Sunday in Epiphany, we are thinking about the start of that ministry - the ministry that was to change the world - to give the whole of creation Hope. Hope that death is not the end. Hope of forgiveness. Hope of salvation. Hope of a fresh start - a new life - eternal life. Hope of rebirth. What better, more appropriate start could there be for this New Year?

We are all longing for 2021 to be brighter and better than 2020 (not difficult!) But no matter what is going on around us (and goodness knows *what* we will have to deal with) we'll be in the right "place" to deal with it - if we focus on Jesus, listen to His words, follow Him, trust Him, and worship Him as Lord.

Hymn: The Kingdom of God

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

- 1 **The kingdom of God is justice and joy,
for Jesus restores what sin would destroy;
God's power and glory in Jesus we know,
and here and hereafter the kingdom shall grow.**

- 2 **The kingdom of God is mercy and grace,
the prisoners are freed, the sinners find place,
the outcast are welcomed God's banquet to share,
and hope is awakened in place of despair.**

- 3 **The kingdom of God is challenge and choice,
believe the good news, repent and rejoice!
His love for us sinners brought Christ to his cross,
our crisis of judgement for gain or for loss.**

- 4 **God's kingdom is come, the gift and the goal,
in Jesus begun, in heaven made whole;
the heirs of the kingdom shall answer his call,
and all things cry glory to God all in all!**

Bryn Rees (1911–1983)

The Psalm set for today is a worship Psalm - Try playing it through twice - once to listen, and once to join in - reading it out loud yourself, as a powerful prayer of worship and praise and thanksgiving.

Psalm 111

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

Praise the Lord.

I will extol the Lord with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly.

Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them. Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures for ever.

He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the Lord is gracious

and compassionate. He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant for ever. He has shown his people the power of his works, giving them the lands of other nations.

The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy. They are established for ever and ever, enacted in faithfulness and uprightness. He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant for ever – holy and awesome is his name.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding.

To him belongs eternal praise.

Amen.

A prayer of confession

Father God we come to You in our weakness. We cannot live sinlessly, blamelessly. We are constantly breaking Your laws, and disobeying Your commandments. We know what You want us to do, and we don't do it - where You want us to go, and we don't go there - what You want us to say, and we don't say it. We are full of guilt. - wandering away from You and Your word seems so much a part of who we are, and we really are sorry. But even while we are saying that we are sorry, we know that we are very likely to make exactly the same mistakes over again, - we can't help ourselves!

BUT - we don't have to - - You are such a gracious, loving, generous Father, that You Yourself have given us hope and help in Your son, Jesus. We cannot remain pure, but He is pure. We wander away - but He remains true. We lack discipline in our spiritual lives, but He is constant and unchanging. We deserve to be punished for all our wrongdoing, but He has taken our punishment Himself, and has already paid our debts, and, what is so hard to take in, is that all we have to do is turn to You, truly seeking forgiveness - thank You - praise You, Lord.

Hallelujah - what a Saviour!

Let us join in together in the prayer that the Lord Jesus taught us . . .

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

**Your Kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours.

Now and for ever.

Amen.

The Gospel reading for today - Mark 1:21-28

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

They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.

Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, ‘What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!’

‘Be quiet!’ said Jesus sternly. ‘Come out of him!’

The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, ‘What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.’ News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

Reflection:

And here it is - - the start of Jesus' ministry here on Earth. Just 8 verses - but *what* verses - - *what* a start!

There is one word that shines out clearly in these verses - **AUTHORITY**
Vs 22 - "The people were amazed at Jesus' teaching, because He taught them as one who had authority - not as the teachers of the law".

Authority - In looking up various origins of the word I found some very relevant definitions which may help shine a light on the person of Jesus, and His actions on that day, as He stepped onto the tiled floor of the Capernaum synagogue, in the central space reserved for the teacher, and began to speak to the congregation sitting there around Him.

Our English word "authority" derives from the Latin word "auctor" which means 3 things:

- **Master** - The one in charge
The one who gives orders
The one who takes responsibility.
- **Leader** - The one who leads the way
The one to be followed
The one who makes decisions
The one who chooses the route.
- **Author** - The creator
The start of it all
The originator
The one who writes the story.

It is this authority that the people saw and heard in Jesus that day - it was unmissable - it was something such as they had not witnessed before, even with the teachings of the scribes (trained in the Law and the Scriptures).

The word used in verse 22 for the reaction of the people literally describes them as being in shock, or even panic - astounded! - That is the effect of meeting Jesus for the first time! - - Why? - What was it that made them sit up and take notice? What was He saying? Mark doesn't tell us, but if we turn to Luke's account of this incident we may find a clue in the verses which precede it . . .

. . . Jesus has gone up from Capernaum to Nazareth, His home town, and there He stands in the synagogue and reads Isaiah 61 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind - to release the oppressed - to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" - and then "today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing!"

No mistaking what this means - in other words - I am the one you have been waiting for - the one God has sent - the Messiah.

And Jesus speaks with such authority (also remarked upon in Luke's account) that it cannot be ignored - He has to be listened to - and that in turn means that there are decisions to be made - questions to be answered - not only by the Capernaum listeners, but by us too :

Decision 1 - do we believe that Jesus is who He says He is?

Decision 2 - do we believe that what He teaches is right and good?

Decision 3 - are we prepared to follow Him? (Or are we just going to stay sitting in our seats in shock?)

Decision 4 - are we going to spread the word "over the whole region" as He asks, or just keep it to ourselves?

But there is something else that happens that day in Capernaum - something that is alarming and uncomfortable, but also reassuring and amazing - Jesus demonstrates His authority to overcome evil.

Jesus is confronted and challenged by an evil spirit - a "demon" who knows exactly who He is and why He has come. And Jesus, commanding the spirit, is stern and strong and definite - this is no "gentle Jesus meek and mild" - this is Jesus, the son of God, wielding the authority given Him by His Father - and there is no arguing with it - it demands immediate obedience.

The ancient Greek word used here for authority, "exousia" is used when referring to power - the right to give commands, and to demand obedience. The evil spirit obeys at once, to the astonishment of the onlookers. No wonder the people ask each other "what is this? - a new teaching - and with authority!" vs27.

As a start to Jesus' ministry you have to admit it's pretty strong! - This is the first of the healing miracles recorded in the gospels and it is to be

followed by numerous others (18 detailed and many others referred to), along with three recorded instances of Jesus raising the dead, and accounts of miracles demonstrating Jesus' authority over His creation (storms, water, fish, fig tree, wine, food).

Jesus' authority is absolute - it is for all time - eternal - it always has been, and it always will be. He is the author of creation and the sustainer of Creation - (Colossians 1 16-17)

And yet - when He came to Earth, He came as a helpless baby - a human- a "servant"- Why?

Jesus' authority is not that of a tyrant or a despot-dictator relying on his position to make everyone bow down and cower before Him. No! -

Jesus' authority is loving, caring, reaching out - joining us here on earth in our everyday lives as our brother as well as our Lord.

And how must we respond to such authority?

Knowing *who* Jesus is not enough - even evil spirits know who Jesus is - This *has* to be personal. We must trust Him every day of our existence, in every aspect of our life and every part of our being - commit ourselves to following Him wherever He may lead us. We must allow Him to transform us, to change us, to heal us.

It is only when we can say "*my* Lord, *my* saviour, *my* Jesus" that this authority can work to lift us out of our despair, and give us Hope and Life in all its fullness.

Hymn: My Jesus, My Saviour

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

My Jesus, my Saviour,
Lord there is none like you.
All of my days, I want to praise,
The wonders of your mighty love

My comfort, my shelter,
Tower of refuge and strength.
Let every breath, all that I am,
Never cease to worship you.

**Shout to the Lord let us sing,
Power and majesty, praise to the King.
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar,
At the sound of your Name.**

**I'll sing for Joy at the works of your hands.
Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand.
Nothing compares to the promise,
I have in you.**

Darlene Zschech (b. 1965)

Prayers of Intercession

Oh Lord - these are troubled times! - so many problems - so many dangers - so much we can't deal with. We don't understand why such dreadful things are happening around us, - why coronavirus continues to spread - why there is so much conflict and hatred - why so much is falling apart - going wrong - and yet we do know and firmly believe that You are a God of love, and we trust You, Lord - Hear our prayers as we cry out to You in our troubles.

We bring to You those we know who are suffering through loneliness, bereavement and depression; those who are confused in mind or fighting illness and pain . . .

We bring to You those in positions of authority, making important decisions - those in government, in the health services and emergency services, those searching for cures and solutions . . .

We lift Your church to You - many are finding it hard to worship alone - doubts come and go - faith wavers. We need the support of each other to stay strong, but that is difficult at present . . .

Keep us close to You, Lord. Strengthen and give us hope, and the deep joy, even in adversity, that comes from knowing You.

We ask all these things in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Hymn: Jesus, the name high over all

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Close the tab after the hymn

- 1 Jesus — the name high over all,
in hell, or earth, or sky!
Angels revere, and nations fall,
and devils fear and fly.
- 2 Jesus — the name to sinners dear,
the name to sinners given!
It scatters all their guilty fear,
it turns their hell to heaven.
- 3 Jesus — the prisoner's fetters breaks,
and bruises Satan's head;
power into strengthless souls it speaks,
and life into the dead.
- 4 O that the world might taste and see
the riches of his grace!
The arms of love that compass me
would all mankind embrace.
- 5 His only righteousness I show,
his saving grace proclaim;
'tis all my business here below
to cry: 'Behold the Lamb!'
- 6 Happy if with my latest breath
I might but gasp his name;
preach him to all, and cry in death:
'Behold, behold the Lamb!'

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Colossians 1:16-18

In fact, every single thing was created through, and for, Him. He is both the first principle and the upholding principle of the whole scheme of creation. And now He is the head of the body which is composed of all Christian people. Life from nothing began through Him, and life from the dead began through Him, and He is therefore, justly called the Lord of all.