

# Welshpool & Bro Hafren Methodist Circuit

Home Worship Sheet, 18<sup>th</sup> April, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter 2021

**This short act of worship has been prepared and written for you by Graham Smith.**

## Call to Worship

We ask you Lord, that now and every time we come to you to worship and pray, that we will be aware of your presence, be conscious of your power, and sense your protection over us, and know in our hearts and minds the wonder and grace of your never-ending peace.

Amen

## Hymn: The head that once was crowned with thorns

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

- 1      The head that once was crowned with thorns  
is crowned with glory now;  
a royal diadem adorns  
the mighty Victor's brow.
- 2      The highest place that heaven affords  
is his, is his by right,  
the King of kings and Lord of lords,  
and heaven's eternal Light.
- 3      The joy of all who dwell above,  
the joy of all below,  
to whom he manifests his love,  
and grants his name to know.
- 4      To them the cross, with all its shame,  
with all its grace, is given;  
their name an everlasting name,  
their joy the joy of heaven.
- 5      They suffer with the Lord below,  
they reign with him above;  
their profit and their joy to know  
the mystery of his love.

6      The cross he bore is life and health,  
          though shame and death to him;  
          his people's hope, his people's wealth,  
          their everlasting theme.

Thomas Kelly (1820)

### **The Adopted Lambs**

The beautiful, green hills of Wales, are dotted everywhere with white sheep. During the yearly lambing season, thousands of baby lambs are born. Unfortunately, some lambs die at birth. Many ewes are also lost during lambing season; they die giving birth.

In an attempt to save the orphaned lambs, the shepherds match baby lambs that have lost their mothers with ewes who have lost their lambs.

It's not as easy as it sounds, though, since a mother sheep won't accept a lamb and nurse it unless it is her own.

How, then, do shepherds get a ewe to accept an orphaned lamb as her own? The process is as old as shepherding itself. The mother's own lamb, which has died, is skinned, and the skin of the dead lamb is draped over the living lamb as it is placed by the adoptive mother's side. The mother sheep then smells the skin and blood and accepts the orphaned lamb as her own.

Lambing season in Wales reminds us of what was done for us on a cross two thousand years ago. When the Apostle John wrote of being saved by "the blood of the Lamb," it was in terms that people in agricultural societies vividly understood. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the Blood of Christ. For He... has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility..."

Because of Christ's blood, God accepts us as His own. Once we were orphans, but now we are God's adopted children.

Author Unknown

We are reminded by an old familiar hymn.....

There is a green hill far away,  
Outside a city wall,  
Where the dear Lord was crucified,  
Who died to save us all.

There was no other good enough  
To pay the price of sin;  
He only could unlock the gate  
Of heaven and let us in.

### Hymn: I am not skilled to understand

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

- 1 I am not skilled to understand  
What God hath willed, what God has planned;  
I only know at His right hand  
Is One who is my Saviour.
- 2 I take Him at His word indeed;  
“Christ died for sinners,” this I read;  
For in my heart I find a need  
Of Him to be my Saviour.
- 3 That He should leave His place on high  
And come for sinful man to die,  
You count it strange? So once did I,  
Before I knew my Saviour.
- 4 And oh, that He fulfilled may see  
The travail of His soul in me,  
And with His work contented be,  
As I with my dear Saviour.
- 5 Yes, living, dying, let me bring  
My strength, my solace, from this spring;  
That He who lives to be my king  
Once died to be my Saviour.

Dora Greenwell (1873)

### Luke 24:36-49

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

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’

They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?’

**Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.'**

**When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, 'Do you have anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.**

**He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.'**

**Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, 'This is what is written: the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'**

### **1 Peter 1:3-9**

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

**Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.**

**In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**

## **Reflection:**

When I see football heroes or movie stars or television presenters or company directors being paid vast sums of money, I confess to a feeling of righteous indignation. It doesn't seem fair or just that many in the world who are starving could be fed by just one week's salary from one of these rich people. There's something wrong in a world which rewards a handful of people with wealth so vast that they barely know what to do with it, but is happy to allow others to starve.

And yet if I'm honest, part of my righteous indignation probably contains a hefty dose of envy. How I'd enjoy having so much money that I could swan off on exotic holidays whenever I felt like it, or buy a new car every year, or generously donate to some worthy cause without even thinking about it. And perhaps that feeling of envy is why some of us feel so angry about 'Fat Cats', because accumulating wealth by manipulating the system have more money than we do.

And yet when I really think seriously about the wealthy, I know I wouldn't change a moment of my life for a moment of theirs. However attractive wealth seems to be from time to time, especially when I'm struggling, I know very well that the attraction would soon fade and then I'd be left feeling empty again. That seems very apparent from the high lives led by many wealthy stars, lives which never seem to be fulfilled however glamorous they might appear to be on the surface and which have clear elements of serious discontent about them. A significant number of people with wealth commit suicide or marry and divorce seemingly endlessly or get into drugs or alcoholism.

So although wealth seems on the surface to be very attractive, perhaps the attraction is more in the dream than in the reality. As St Peter says in today's epistle, there's only one sort of wealth worth having, and that's an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. And that, of course, is the inheritance we receive from God. God has given us the gift of new life through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and that's an amazing gift.

What exactly is this new life and how has it happened, and when do we receive it?

It became a reality for all human beings on that first Easter Day when

**Jesus suddenly appeared in the middle of the room and began talking to his friends. That was when they all really began to realise that something amazing had happened. The women had gone to the tomb on the first Easter morning and returned with strange tales about Jesus' body having disappeared, and Mary Magdalene even claimed to have met Jesus in person. But since she was only a woman and women are known to be emotional creatures, her tale was easily rationalised and dismissed. Clearly she had met the gardener, and deranged by grief, had thought him to be Jesus.**

**But then the Upper Room he appeared to all his disciples at the same time, and once they saw him for themselves, there was only one possible explanation. He was alive, and what's more, alive and well. The Jesus who appeared in the Upper Room bore no resemblance to the poor, broken human body which died on the cross, for now he was vibrantly, radiantly alive. As soon as they saw him, the disciples believed. But Thomas was absent at the time and so missed out on this fantastic, incredible experience. And that's exactly what he thought of the tale - fantastic, incredible - until he too met Jesus for himself. Then he too believed and his life changed completely.**

**This is the inheritance and the new life which is waiting for all of us. I would go so far as to say that no-one can meet the risen Christ and not be changed by him. LOOK AT THOMAS! Remember the Apostle Paul never actually met Christ in the flesh – but his life was totally transformed when he met with and EXPERIENCED the presence of the risen Lord.**

**If your life hasn't changed, if the Bible and prayer and churchy-type things have an element of boredom and duty for you rather than excitement and pleasure, then perhaps you have only seen the risen Christ from a distance and not actually met him for yourself.**

**How is it possible to meet him now, after a distance of 2,000 years? He meets us through his Spirit, the God within. As well as being "out there", God is also within each of us, part of our being. We can choose whether we wish to allow that God within to grow and develop, or whether we wish to crush him, or ignore him, or regard him from a distance with a true British reserve.**

It's perfectly possible to regard Jesus from a distance, to like what you see and to try to live a good Christian life. Many people do that, and it doesn't require going to church or setting time aside for prayer or meeting Jesus for yourself. Jesus still responds to that, because he responds to every approach we human beings make, however tentative. But that's a bit like dipping your toe in the ocean and then claiming that you're swimming. Those who REALLY want to swim must get undressed, must don special clothing, must wade out into the water or dive into it, and must then take the risk of lifting their feet off the seabed and trusting the water to hold them. Then they have a whole different and much more wonderful and exciting experience of swimming. A few go even further and surf or swim the channel or go in for racing.

The new life won for us by the risen Christ is very similar. Some dip their toes in it, some only paddle in it, and never experience it in all its fullness and awe and wonder. To do that you must be stripped of all your defences and wear special clothing which is spelt out in St Paul's letter to the Ephesians - the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit and feet ready to get going (Ephesians 6:13-17) - and you must then wade into or dive into Christ and the Bible and Church. And most importantly, after doing all that, you have to take your feet off the seabed and trust God himself to take control of your life. Then you'll have an experience of meeting with the risen Christ and your life will be changed into something very different from what it was before.

That's the inheritance that's waiting for all of us. And once you've experienced that, the wealth of this world fades into complete insignificance because this is the inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, which starts in this life and which is even more amazing and glorious after death because then we live with God himself in person. Once you've begun to experience that life, you may never care about other people's wealth again.

## **PRAYER**

We bring before God the needs of our world.....

Lord, we pray for a world weighed down by many troubles. May your light and wisdom guide those who hold positions of

responsibility and power in our nation and in our world. May they be guided in the almost impossible decisions they are called upon to make. They especially need your help in these dark times.

Lord, we live in a greedy world where so many people are misused and exploited by others. Hear our prayer for those who are homeless, those who live as refugees and those who struggle in places of vulnerability and poverty.

Loving Lord, make your church in every place compassionate, strong and courageous in your service. Though we feel inadequate and unable to do much to help, may we seek your power and be open to receive your love; so may we be willing and able to celebrate and share your love with others, in our words and actions.

Gracious Lord, hear us as we pray for ALL in need today:

We pray for the Queen and the royal family in the passing of Prince Phillip and for so many, that we personally know, who are grieving, and so many more who are lonely, worried or anxious. We pray for all who are ill, wherever they are, especially those affected by the Covid 19 virus. We pray for their care, treatment and recovery, and for the health and safety of all who are caring for them, and for all skilled and dedicated front-line workers.

Heavenly Father, we pray for ourselves, and for those that we love. As we continue to come to terms with this horrible pandemic we pray for the life of our communities: for schools, shops and all places of work. As we plan and work to re-open society may we do so safely, and always with care and thought for others. We think of those who have lost jobs or businesses, and we pray for those who are continuing to self-isolate, for all who feel they remain vulnerable. May we all act with care, looking out for one another and keeping safe ourselves.

**We join together in the prayer that Jesus taught His first disciples.....**

**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**

### **Closing Prayer**

**Eternal God and Father, help us to entrust the past to your mercy,  
the present to your love, and the future to your wisdom,  
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who is the same yesterday, today and for ever.  
Amen.**

