

Welshpool & Bro Hafren Methodist Circuit

Home Worship Sheet, 16th May

This short act of worship has been prepared and written for you by John Harbron.

Call to Worship

At this Ascensiontide, we need to remind ourselves:

Christ has passed from earthly sight yet remains close to each one of us.

Christ passed from the limits of time into eternity and on into immortality.

Christ is far beyond our human understanding yet, holding each of us in his love.

Christ is suffering with us, dying for us calling us to Resurrected life.

Our Lord, our Saviour, our Friend.

Last Thursday, 40 days after Jesus rose from the dead, He ascended into heaven to be with his Father.

The hymns and songs in this time of Worship, together with the images Derek has added, celebrate this event. Jesus Christ is alive and is there by our side in our memories, reality, eternity and immortality.

Let us come together with our opening hymn!

Hymn: Immortal, invisible, God only wise

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

- 1 Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.
- 2 Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might —
thy justice like mountains high soaring above
thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

**3 To all life thou givest, to both great and small;
in all life thou livest, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
and wither and perish; but naught changeth thee.**

**4 Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
all praise we would render: O help us to see
'tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.**

**5 Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
all praise we would render: O help us to see
'tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.**

Walter Chalmers Smith (1824–1908)

Opening Prayer:

**Lord Jesus Christ, we praise you for the wonder of your mercy,
the extent of your love and your great gift of life.**

**We thank you for not only everything you have done
but for everything you have yet to do –
the blessings we have yet to experience,
the insights we have yet to discover,
and the joys you yet hold in store.**

You were brought low, yet you have been lifted high.

You were the servant of all, yet you are above all and beyond all.

**You were despised and rejected, yet your name is exalted above all
names.**

You were fully human, yet you are divine.

**You were taken up into heaven, yet you are here by our sides. You are
higher than our highest thoughts, yet we can know you as a friend.**

**So, with all your people in every age, we bow before you and proclaim
you as our risen Saviour, the King of kings and Lord of lords.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, we claim to follow you, and declare you to be the
Lord and King of our lives, but all too often our actions deny our words.**

We have broken your commandments, betrayed your love and ignored your guidance, our faith is fickle and our allegiance is poor.

Forgive us Lord for all the ways we fail you, through our thoughts, words and deeds.

Forgive us Lord for our limited understanding of your greatness and narrowness of our vision.

Forgive us Lord for our inability to grasp the values of your kingdom, still less to base our lives upon them.

Lord Jesus, we come before your throne, throwing ourselves upon your grace, and asking you to receive our homage and service, poor though these may be.

Live in our hearts and use us for the growth of your kingdom to the glory of your name, Jesus Christ, our Saviour, our Friend.

Amen.

Our Gospel reading is the lectionary passage for Ascension Day. This comes at the end of Luke's Gospel.

Jesus has appeared to all the disciples after his rising from the dead but they don't recognise him immediately.

When they do, Jesus tells them what's coming next..

Luke 24:44 – 53

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.

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.'

When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and

was taken up into heaven. Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

This account by Luke reminded me of a song by Steel Eye Span.

The disciples had been with Jesus for 3 years.

Now Jesus tells them he is going to ascend into heaven
and will no longer be with them in person.

It is down to them to carry on all that he'd taught and shown them.

Song – “The Song Will Remain” - Steeleye Span

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

**If I were a singer I'd sing you a song
A song that would live in your heart forever;
I'd sing it loud and strong
Every single word
So that when my life is over
And I never see you again
The singer may die but the song will remain**

**For all I have is gold and silver
And such things so easy to find
And that's all I have to leave you
When I leave you behind**

**If I were a singer I'd sing you a song
A song that would live in your heart forever;
I'd sing it loud and strong
Every single word
So that when my life is over
And I never see you again
The singer may die but the song will remain**

Peter Knight

Reflection

When the disciples entered Jerusalem with the crowds enthusiastically welcoming Jesus, life must have felt good.

Five days later they see Jesus nailed to a cross and then placed in a tomb. All that was left was their memory of him, and fear for their own lives.

Three days later, they find the tomb empty and according to Luke, no Jesus to be found. But later that day, a new, unrecognisable Jesus appears among them, only to be told, he is going to leave them again. This time, he's going to be taken up to heaven to be at the side of his Father.

No Jesus by their side to help them witness the teachings and example they had learnt over the past three years. They were on their own except for a power from heaven they would receive when they were in Jerusalem.

For us, the passing of someone stirs memories.

Sooner or later, we discover the reality of the situation we find ourselves in. The loss of not having someone to call on, be at our side. The concepts of eternity and immortality are way beyond our thoughts. But this song, "The song will remain" tells us a person's presence, their life is still alive, albeit in the status of eternity.

We saw images of what three great hymn writers have given us forever.

Each of us makes a lasting mark, however small it may look or feel.

The Ascension of Jesus into heaven means he is still alive, able to be by our side to help us through good times and more difficult times.

Jesus is not stuck in a tomb, he is not restricted to being only in one place, he can now be anywhere and everywhere.

Not just for eternity, but for ever like his Father, for he is now immortal.

He is no longer the singer, he is the song.

Now let us hear from the beginning of Luke's second book as he describes in greater detail Jesus's ascendance into heaven.

Acts 1: 1 – 11

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.

In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.’

Then they gathered round him and asked him, ‘Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?’

He said to them: ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.’

Whilst the disciples were waiting in Jerusalem to be baptised with the Holy Spirit - whatever the implications of that would be.

I’m sure they would have reflected on their time with Jesus. Memories.

Let us now reflect on his life as we listen – or join in if we want to.

Hymn – “I danced in the morning” - The Corries

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

I danced in the morning when the world was begun,
and I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun;
came down from heaven and I danced on the earth,
at Bethlehem I had my birth.

Refrain Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the Dance, said He.
I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
I'll lead you all in the dance, said He.

Refrain
I danced for the scribe and the Pharisee,
they would not dance; they would not follow me.
I danced for the fisherman, for James and John
and they came with me and the dance went on.

Refrain
I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame,
the holy people said it was a shame.
They whipped and they stripped and they hung me high,
they left me there on the cross to die.

Refrain
I danced on a Friday, and the sky turned black,
its hard to dance with the Devil on your back.
They buried my body and they thought was gone
but I am the dance and I still go on.

Refrain
They cut me down, but I leapt up high,
I am the life that will never, never die.
I'll live in you if you'll live in me,
for I am the Lord of the Dance, said He.

Refrain

Reflection:

A foot tapper and one to get up and have a dance until the last verse when the reality of what has happened strikes us forcibly.

It's my favourite version of the hymn because The Corries are concerned with words and not just the music. An opportunity to recall the life of Jesus, not just for the disciples but for us as well.

The scene is set with the creation and the birth of Jesus.

Then we have this seismic contrast between those you'd expect to embrace the teachings of God's Son and mere fishermen.

In the four lines of the verse, the great division facing Jesus is laid before us. So it's no surprise in the next verse the opposition to Jesus wins the day by scheming to having him crucified.

The Corries, like everyone else who sings the hymn keeps up the tempo as they bury his body. The followers of Jesus thought he'd gone forever – but we know something they don't.

It comes as a surprise when the hymn slows right down

“They cut me down”. What a despairing image that is.

Then very gradually the tempo increases.

“I am the life that'll never, never die”.

This is the message of The Ascension. Jesus is now immortal, he is with us forever. We have this great assurance “I'll live in you if you live in me”. The choice is ours. If we say “Yes” then we are dancing together so to speak. We are part of each other and we won't be saying “Goodbye” to each other.

One of Sydney Carter's other great hymns he has given to us is:-

“When I needed a neighbour, were you there?”

For the many people who are in need, for all sorts of reasons we can't do anything practical to help. But there is one thing we can do, that is pray to our Lord to help them. Others are called to be God's servants helping those in need. Jesus is able to be by their side supporting them.

Prayers of Intercession:

Lord, we pray for your church.

We ask you to enrich our worship, empower our witness and transform our service here and in the world. May we have an ever-increasing openness to the power of your Spirit and the gifts it brings to inspire the lives of all your people.

We pray that your presence and power may be seen in everything we say and do together.

May all our plans and hopes and dreams be inspired with an increasing awareness that we are people of God.

Lord in your mercy, [Hear our prayer.](#)

We pray for those who are blind and deaf; for those whose minds or bodies are disabled; for those whose world is bounded by their limitations of sight or of hearing, their health or their strength; for those who are blind to your love and deaf to your call; for those who allow their own minds and lack of knowledge of you and your glory to limit their expectations of who you are and what you can do.

May the Lordship of the ascended Christ unlock the door to a transforming experience.

Lord in your mercy, [Hear our prayer.](#)

We pray for those who are fit and well; for those for whom life holds no fears or worries, to whom all the good things of life have come almost too easily; for those who have become locked up in their comfortable living and for those who feel no need of you or your life-transforming love and have no desire to worship you; for those who see no further than the needs of today and give no thought to the demands of eternity.

May the Lordship of the ascended Christ open their minds and their lives to him now.

Lord in your mercy, [Hear our prayer.](#)

We pray in the quietness of our own hearts for any we know

to be in need of your loving presence and your healing grace.

All those who are in Care Homes.

All those who are not well at this time.

Those who are waiting for tests to be carried out
and those who are waiting for results of tests.

We bring before you all who have recently died
and those who are dying.

We bring to you Lord, all the families who are mourning loss,
those who care and are concerned at the suffering of loved ones.

We pray for ourselves and our need of his presence by our side.

May the Lordship of the ascended Christ bring comfort, love,
peace and strength.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We ask this in the name of our ascended Lord, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

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.

Reflection

In our prayers for others, we included those who find life gives them all they want, for them God is superfluous.

It reminds me of the time in the early 1980's when the Newtown church was demolished to make way for the new one. We had our morning worship at All Saints. All Saints had a Men's Group which met up once a month and we were invited to join them when they had a Guest Speaker or visiting somewhere of interest.

On one occasion, it was a Producer from the ITV News.

I can't recall his name, we know the names of those in front of the camera but not those behind it.

He was Irish from a Catholic home. The Church and the family's faith was very important to them and he was happy to be brought up this way.

Going to Mass each Sunday was a bedrock in his life.

The time came when he had to get a job and ended up moving to London to join ITV News. He found it very interesting and got more and more involved in it as he was promoted through Network.

His faith and going to Mass were important as he started work. But with the pressures of work to advance up the ranks, getting married and starting a family, going to Mass became less and less.

He was earning enough to have a nice home, have everything they needed and some nice holidays. The higher in the Network he went, the more demanding it was on his time, but money earned was paying for a luxurious lifestyle and they wanted for nothing.

Then one day, he was taken ill and rushed to hospital. Once in hospital he found he could do absolutely nothing for himself except just lie in the bed.

He was totally dependant on the nurses and doctors to care for him.

Whilst in this state, he found Jesus at his bedside. "I've finally caught up with you" Jesus said, "You're one of the most elusive people I've wanted to talk to. I'm sorry for your plight but you're going nowhere, and now you're going to have to listen to me!"

Over the next week or so, he was taken back through his life and then into the life he'd been leading for the last few years. There, lying in that hospital bed, he realised he'd deserted God for the material things in life. Whilst he thought he was leading a contented and satisfying life, he now knew he was missing something. That something was Jesus giving him a purpose in life.

Jesus was able to visit him, as he does to countless others because he ascended into heaven to be by his Father's side.

When the ITV News Producer left hospital he became a new person with Jesus a part of him.

“Amazing grace – how sweet the sound –
that saved a wretch like me!”

“My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.”

“Love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.”

He went to Mass regularly. At work he formed a Christian Group within the News Department. They held Prayer Meetings and supported each other in difficult times and when covering traumatic news items.

They realised that there needed to be integrity and Christian ethics to ensure news items were being treated fairly and not sensationally.

Jesus is continually trying to make contact with us. Sometimes it takes extreme circumstances to get our attention. How often we see good come out of suffering.

For Jesus, it was death on a cross which led to him ascending to join his Father and become immortal. We are the beneficiaries of him ascending into heaven. The ITV News Producer I've spoken about is just one.

We will all at sometime or other stray away from Jesus.

Our message to all those who've not yet found Jesus, or for some reason have let him go, it's once you've found him never ever let him go.

And that goes for each one of us as well.

Jesus is our one and only who we must keep inside us. He will live in us if we live in him. We must never say goodbye.

Amen.

Song – “Immortality” - Celine Dion

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

**So this is who I am
And this is all I know
And I must choose to live
For all that I can give
The spark that makes the power grow
And I will stand for my dream if I can
Symbol of my faith in who I am
But you are my only
And I must follow on the road, that lies ahead
And I won't let my heart control my head
But you are my only
And we don't say goodbye
We don't say goodbye
And I know what I've got to be
Immortality
I make my journey through eternity
I keep the memory of you and me
Inside
Fulfill your destiny
Is there within the child
My storm will never end
My fate is on the wind**

The king of hearts, the joker's wild
We don't say goodbye
We don't say goodbye
I'll make them all remember me
'Cause I have found a dream that must come true
Every ounce of me must see it through
But you are my only
I'm sorry I don't have a role for love to play
Hand over my heart I'll find my way
I will make them give to me
Immortality
There is a vision and a fire in me
I keep the memory of you and me, inside
And we don't say goodbye
We don't say goodbye
With all my love for you
And what else we may do
We don't say, goodbye

Blessing

The blessing of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be upon you now and always.
In the name of Jesus Christ, may you be inseparable
as you go to love and serve the Lord.