

# Welshpool & Bro Hafren Methodist Circuit

Home Worship Sheet, 29<sup>th</sup> January 2023

This short act of worship has been prepared and written for you by John Harbron, on the theme of The Beatitudes

## Call to Worship

It is perfect within us, O Lord, the work of grace which you have begun.

May we think, speak and do only what is pleasing in your sight.

Keep us from falling back into the sins of which we have repented.

May we live our lives in your presence and finish them by your side; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*William Bright (1824 – 1901)*

## Hymn      StF 51      Great is thy faithfulness

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

- 1      **Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,  
there is no shadow of turning with thee;  
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;  
as thou hast been thou forever wilt be:**

*Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness  
Morning by morning new mercies I see;  
all I have needed thy hand hath provided.  
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.*

- 2      **Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,  
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,  
join with all nature in manifold witness  
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love:**

- 3      **Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
blessings all mine with ten thousand beside!**

Thomas Chisholm (1866-1960)

## **Opening Prayers**

**Gracious God,**

**We thank you for the astonishing love you showed in your Son, Jesus Christ, sharing our humanity through him.**

**We praise you that through him, you became flesh and blood like us, experiencing the same temptations we face, torn by the same fears, suffering the same pain and tasting the same joys and sorrows.**

**We thank you for the assurance this brings – the knowledge that you understand the worries, concerns, doubts and problems that confront us each day.**

**Living God,**

**forgive us that, too easily, we can slip into a faith of negatives, imagining that you are more concerned with what we shouldn't do rather than with what we should.**

**Teach us that, although there is a very real place for self-denial, there is also a place for affirming and celebrating life in all its fullness.**

**Help us Lord, on this journey with you to grow and learn, to deepen our faith and strengthen our commitment; and above all, a time to make more room for you, so that you can work in our lives, and enrich our experience of your love.**

**We ask this through your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.**

**Amen.**

## **Old Testament Reading**

## **Micah ch 6 vs 1 – 8**

***The Old Testament reading set for today is from Micah. It was his prophecy that a ruler will come out of Bethlehem. Bethlehem, a small town, but that was where David was born. And it will produce another ruler.***

***The prophet Micah lived 700 years before Christ. A contemporary of Isaiah. The people of Israel and Judah had been going their own way***

*rather than with God. This had allowed the Assyrians to invade their nation. Micah has a few home truths to tell them.*

Listen to what the Lord says:

“Stand up, plead my case before the mountains;  
let the hills hear what you have to say.  
Hear, you mountains, the Lord’s accusation;  
listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth.  
For the Lord has a case against his people;  
he is lodging a charge against Israel.

My people, what have I done to you?  
How have I burdened you? Answer me.  
I brought you up out of Egypt  
and redeemed you from the land of slavery.  
I sent Moses to lead you,  
also Aaron and Miriam.  
My people, remember  
what Balak king of Moab plotted  
and what Balaam son of Beor answered.  
Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal,  
that you may know the righteous acts of the Lord.”

With what shall I come before the Lord  
and bow down before the exalted God?  
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,  
with calves a year old?  
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,  
with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?  
Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.  
And what does the Lord require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God.

*Succinctly, in that last verse, we learn what it is God wants from us.  
And it’s not offerings and sacrifices*

## **Gospel Reading**

## **Matthew ch 5 vs 1 – 12**

*Our Gospel reading comes from the Lectionary Gospel for this year – Matthew. Over the last few weeks, we've had the introductions to his gospel.*

*Today we get down to some serious business:*

*What we know as The Sermon on the Mount.*

*What God expects from us. The Beatitudes.*

**Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.**

**He said:**

**“Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.**

**Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.**

**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.**

**Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.**

**Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.**

**Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.**

**Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”**

**Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

*The Beatitudes tell us life is not a bed of roses, just as our next hymn does.*

*But with Jesus Christ there with us, it is so achievable and rewarding.*

## **Hymn StF 629 God of my faith, I offer you my doubt**

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

- 1 God of my faith, I offer you my doubt,  
for life at times seems far too dark for me,  
and my belief becomes more insecure,  
when worldly cares produce uncertainty.**
  
- 2 God of my hope, I offer you my fear,  
when I am scared by my anxiety,  
when all I hear is suffering and woe,  
in all my shadows you will walk with me.**
  
- 3 God of my joy, I offer you my grief,  
when I sink down in sadness or despair,  
when in depression I cannot be touched,  
I pray in all my depths to find you there.**
  
- 4 God of my love, I offer you my pain,  
when I'm alone and feel nobody cares,  
in aching age or in rejected youth,  
you bear my cross and dry my human tears.**
  
- 5 God of my life, I offer you my dreams,  
light in the darkness where I hide from view,  
light in my faith, my hope, my joy and love,  
light in my life and all my life in you.**

Colin Ferguson (b. 1937)

### **Reflection**

**Our Lectionary Gospel for this year is Matthew. The first four chapters have been leading us to this point and here we are at the beginning of chapter 5 – a passage that has been named “The Sermon on the Mount.”**

**I think it is worth reminding ourselves of how this fits into the context and structure of Matthew’s Gospel.**

**This gospel was written after 70 AD, a key date for the Jews. A revolt against the Romans started four years earlier and ended with the Romans storming into Jerusalem. They destroyed the Temple which was in essence at the heart of the Jewish faith.**

**Matthew's gospel was written primarily for a Jewish audience, telling them Jesus was "The King of the Jews". The long awaited Messiah.**

**Matthew backs this claim by constantly referring to the Jewish Bible – our Old Testament. He quotes prophecies, Jewish phrases, customs and historic relevance, all of which the readers would understand.**

**We learn that Joseph is a direct descendant of David and Jesus is born as prophesied in the town where David was born, Bethlehem. We learn of the Magi, gentiles coming to worship and honour Jesus. How Herod wants the Magi to let him know where this child was but God tells them to return straight home, not to see Herod. God also tells Joseph to escape to Egypt.**

**They all obey God, leaving Herod to remove by death all possible rivals to him. So Jesus, very soon after his birth, becomes the centre of a battle between God and Satan, the Devil, good and evil, being tempted or resisting temptation.**

**We hear about John the Baptist and Jesus being baptized by him. Then Jesus goes into the wilderness. There the Devil tries to win him over – three times no less – but Jesus resists this by quoting scripture.**

**Jesus then sets out on his ministry, teaching and healing. Matthew puts together the "sayings and narratives" of Jesus into "sermons", five in total, a style which would be familiar to the Jews listening to the Rabbi.**

**The first of these is the longest one, the one we know as "The Sermon on the Mount".**

**The Temple has been destroyed. It's 600 years since there had been a legitimate king. Matthew is very clear that Jesus is the rightful King of the Jews and is a living Temple, one that could never be destroyed. What more could the Jews need?**

**Matthew uses these “sermons” to present the ethics of the Kingdom of God. It is through Jesus, the King of the Jews, that all will be drawn to God.**

**But there is something which can prevent this coming to pass. Evil – personified in the Devil, Satan, leading well intentioned people to go astray.**

**The starting point of being part of the Kingdom of God are the Beatitudes.**

**Characteristics to be achieved and the rewards to be celebrated. Those listening to them on that mountain, or us 2000 years later can be self satisfied on our achievement or alternatively realise what is still required of us.**

**In all of them, we have to recognise temptations will have come our way. It is only when we have resisted them, as Jesus did in the wilderness, can we honestly consider ourselves “Blessed are the...”. Of course, it is not for us to pat ourselves on the back. It is only when it comes from Jesus, the “King of the Jews”, our Saviour that it really counts.**

**This has reminded me of when, a few years ago, Chris Denney talked about The Devil’s Beatitudes. So I’ve looked them up on the internet and I found them from different sources. All of them written by Christians for Christians, including one set from a Methodist church. They are all so amazingly relevant that we should take notice of them. I’d like to share a few of them with you.**

### **THE DEVIL’S BEATITUDES 2023**

- **Blessed are those who do not meet to worship God on a Sunday, those who are too tired, too busy, too distracted to spend just an hour a week in church; they are my best workers as they cause the world to say  
“The Church is failing”.**
- **Blessed are those who stop going to Church because they are touchy and easily offended; they are my missionaries.**

- **Blessed are they who profess to love God but fail to embrace their brother and sister as equals; they will be with me forever.**
- **Blessed are the troublemakers and complainers; they shall be called my children.**
- **Blessed are those who gossip; they shall cause strife and divisions – and that pleases me.**
- **Blessed are those who practice hypocrisy; they prove that God is still not their master; they put into practice what I say or do.**
- **Blessed are those who are critical of church leadership but don't do anything themselves; they shall inherit a place with me.**
- **Blessed are those who, when they hear this, think it is all about other people and not themselves; they are my true disciples.**

**Typically, with some internet sites, you can make comments. Two I especially liked:-**

**“God has built his church to be diverse yet be one, but the devil creates divisions to divide.”**

**“One of the Devil's greatest assets to cause so much mischief is his ability not to be recognised.”**

**The Children of Israel, God's chosen people had a chequered history. Often they seem to have strayed away from God, yet God time and time again saves them.**

**In the short passage we heard from the prophet Micah, that is what he is telling them, and in conclusion he asks “What does the Lord require of you?”**

**“To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God”.**

**These are the qualities which are very important to God, and this is what is at the heart of Matthew's Gospel.**

**The Jews, over the centuries had put their own interpretation to God's word as contained within their Bible and associated books.**

**Jesus, the Messiah had come to point out the true meaning and interpretation. At the heart of it is a God of Love, and we his children should reflect that in our lives – both to God and all the other Children of God.**

**“To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God”.**

**Today, in this country, we don't experience the kind of persecution Jesus talks about. When Matthew wrote his gospel, this new movement following Christ was subject to a two pronged attack, both from the Romans and the Jews.**

**We need to thank God we do not experience that. But we do live in an environment which may not be actively hostile, but we can find it discouraging, disheartening and disturbing.**

**For those who wanted to be close to God in Israel 2000 years ago, I'm sure they would have found the words of Jesus in Matthew's gospel encouraging.**

**For us, what we know as The Beatitudes, the words of Christ are encouraging.**

**But the cautionary tale is to avoid lapsing into the Devil's Beatitudes.**

**Our constant Prayer being:-**

**“Lord, never let us unwittingly become one of these emissaries, by forsaking the love Christ commanded that we have for one another.”**

**And the words from Micah should always be ringing in our ears:-**

**“To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God”.**

**If we can do that Jesus tells us:- we will inherit the earth.**

**We will be called the children of God.**

**And the kingdom of heaven will be ours.**

**And Matthew's hope that Jesus Christ will be King of the Kingdom of God.**

**AMEN.**

## **Prayers of Intercession**

### **POOR**

**Blessed are the poor ....**

**Not the penniless, Lord, but those whose heart is free.  
Free from being caught up in the material things of life.**

**Be with all those who are searching for you,  
But find it difficult with so many things getting in the way.  
We pray that they may come to know you for themselves,  
for the comfort and strength you give can bring into their lives.**

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

### **MOURN**

**Blessed are those who mourn ....**

**Not those who whimper, Lord, but those who raise their voices to praise  
you.**

**Be with those whose lives are empty, they have lost something or  
someone.**

**Their life has changed and they wish to do something about it.**

**May they find your inspiration to move forward.**

**Comfort the sick and those who grieve Lord – especially those known to  
us.**

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

### **MEEK**

**Blessed are the meek ....**

**Not the soft, But those who are patient and tolerant.  
Who show goodness and kindness.**

**It is not easy, Lord, sometimes when we see people struggling, when we  
think we know what is best for them.**

**Help us to support those in need without wanting to take control in  
order to speed things up to fit in with our own lives.**

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

## **JUSTICE**

**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice ....  
Not those who whine, but those who struggle to ensure all are treated fairly.**

**We bring before you the people of the Ukraine and other places around the world where there is conflict.**

**We bring you those in the public services in this country who feel aggrieved at the way they consider they are being treated.**

**We pray for people on all sides of the struggles for justice and fairness.**

**We praise you that there are people who put the cause of justice before their own safety.**

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

## **MERCIFUL**

**Blessed are the merciful ....  
Not those who forget, but those who forgive.**

**You teach us, Lord, to forgive, but that is easier said than done. Forgiveness Lord is a gift which we can freely give, but sometimes the cost to our pride and wellbeing seems too high a price to pay. Forgive us Lord.**

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

## **PURE**

**Blessed are the pure in heart ....  
Not those who act like angels, but those whose life is transparent.**

**We thank you Lord for all your servants who let your light shine through them.**

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

## **PEACEMAKERS**

**Blessed are the peacemakers ....  
Not those who shun conflict, but those who face it squarely.**

**We praise you, Lord, for inspiring people to work to bring about peace and reconciliation, be it between nations, or interests, or in helping to prevent the breakdown of personal relationships.**

May your vision continue to inspire people to help bring about peace, where there is conflict and division.

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

We offer these prayers through our Saviour, Jesus Christ. [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 StF 443 Come let us sing of a wonderful love**

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

- 1 Come let us sing of a wonderful love,  
tender and true;  
out of the heart of the Father above,  
streaming to me and to you:  
wonderful love  
dwells in the heart of the Father above.
- 2 Jesus, the Saviour, this gospel to tell,  
joyfully came;  
came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,  
sharing their sorrow and shame;  
seeking the lost,  
saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

**3** Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;  
why do they roam?  
Love only waits to forgive and forget;  
home! weary wanderer, home!  
Wonderful love  
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

**4** Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love,  
come and abide,  
lifting my life, till it rises above  
envy and falsehood and pride:  
seeking to be  
lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

Robert Walmesley (1831-1903)

## **Grace**

**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, for now and evermore.**

**Amen**

