

Welshpool & Bro Hafren Methodist Circuit

Home Worship Sheet for 14th January 2024

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

Call to worship

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son not to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” *John 1: 43 - 51*

It seems a long time ago, but it was only three weeks ago we were celebrating the birth of Jesus. In today's Lectionary Gospel reading, Jesus is starting his ministry by selecting his first disciples.

Our opening hymn links the baby born at Christmas with who he was prophesied to be, who he became and finally how we should follow in his footsteps.

We've got the Gospels to tell us all about Jesus, but the fledgling group of disciples have no idea what they are going to experience over the next three years and beyond.

Hymn StF 272

From heaven you came, helpless babe

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

- 1 From heaven you came, helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled;
not to be served but to serve,
and give your life that we might live.

*This is our God, the Servant King;
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.*

- 2 There in the garden of tears,
my heavy load he chose to bear;
his heart with sorrow was torn.
'Yet not my will but yours,' he said.

**3 Come see his hands and his feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space,
to cruel nails surrendered.**

**4 So let us learn how to serve,
and in our lives enthrone him;
each other's needs to prefer,
for it is Christ we're serving.**

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

If God had appointed a public relations firm to mastermind the planned introduction of his Son to earth, who would he have chosen?

Certainly not the group Luke introduces us to! No high prestige person in sight .

An elderly obscure priest and his wife who was past child bearing age.

A carpenter, whose only claim to rank was being a distant relative of King David, a long lost and forgotten one, a first century Danny Dyer but without the fame! And there was his young fiancée - on the face of it just a girl.

Then to cap it all, a bunch of shepherds come along to welcome the baby. Shepherds – very near the bottom of the social scale -- their place was up on the hills looking after the sheep, valuable possessions of the well-to-do.

Luke's account concludes with two very elderly workers at the Temple, welcoming God's Son on his earthly ministry.

Though not mentioned by name or title, there must have been an innkeeper to let them have somewhere to use as the inn was full.

An odd group of people chosen by God but perfection personified!

What about the people Jesus selects to be his disciples? – also a very odd collection of characters!

All of these people were “also-rans” in the society of their day.

Do you recall back in 2020 when Covid 19 struck how it turned out to be the “unimportant ones” who were having to care for the sick, the vulnerable, the dying, victims of a rampant pandemic either physically,

emotionally or financially. Heath workers, care workers, teachers, volunteers, bus drivers, train drivers and rail staff, refuse collectors, lorry drivers, shop workers, the list goes on and on, suddenly being recognised as being a necessity in our modern lifestyle.

They have so much in common with the cast list of God introducing his Son to us. Nobodies in many people's eyes. yet they changed the world! For us, four years later, our lives have returned to "normal", the part played by the "unimportant ones" in our lives does not seem as vital as it did then!

Prayers of Praise, Thanksgiving and Confession

Lord, we thank you that you have made yourself known to us,
and you have done so in a way which is surprising for someone who is so important - your one and only Son.

In the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ, you brought to an end the empty speculation as to who you are and whether or not you love us. Not only have you revealed yourself to us, but also in the simplicity of Christ's coming you have swept away any reliance on ourselves – our intellectual searchings, and the assumption of our personal worth.

We thank you for your Son being born of earthly parents and entering into the world in the poverty of a stable, it speaks to us of the depths to which you are prepared to reach down in order to lift us to the height of your throne of grace. His coming teaches us to be open to you, to recognise that you are at work when we least expect it, in ways we could never have dreamt possible.

We thank you that Jesus was born as one of us, experiencing all our limitations of time and place; yet though he was King of Kings and Lord of Lords, he was not born into a life of privilege, but grew in the humble surroundings of family life and with the knowledge of you and your purposes for him.

We thank you for all who, like Mary, have been prepared to say "yes" to you and to your will for their lives; for those, like the shepherds, are so open to you that they respond with a sense of urgency to do your will. For all those like Joseph, prepared to serve you in the background, to

remain almost unnoticed yet remain faithful to you at great cost to themselves.

Lord, in the birth of your Son, we have celebrated not only your coming, but also your living, dying and your rising again. Celebrating the victory of your love, a victory into which, by your Spirit, we can enter today and every day of our lives.

Lord, we thank you and praise you for all the love you give to us.

But we come before you now, realising we can so easily forget to place you at the centre of all we say and do and fail to praise you and thank you for loving us enough to be born into this world to make us your people.

Help us, Lord to remember that you came to change our selfish ways and to be the centre of our lives.

We are sorry that we can think more about what we want, instead of what you are wanting us to give to you. We are sorry that we can get wrapped up thinking about ourselves and our families, and not enough about you. Forgetting those who don't know you, but need to know more about the love you show us.

Forgive us, and by your love, change our hearts and change our minds. We ask this through your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

AMEN

In the verses immediately before the Lectionary Gospel passage we learn:-

Andrew, a follower of John the Baptist, introduces his brother Peter to Jesus. They are not invited at this stage to be his disciples.

The Gospel reading is about two others, not as well known as "the fishermen."

Gospel Reading

John 1: vv 43 – 51

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked.

"Come and see," said Philip.

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."

"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel."

Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that." He then added, "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man."

Reflection

I'm sure there was a lot more going on before Jesus invited any of the unsuspecting candidates to join him as his disciples.

Just as I'm sure God had vetted those who were going to be at the centre of the birth of Jesus.

I think God and Jesus were looking for a spark and ultimately a flame in each of them which would be vital if they were going to fill the part that was being mapped out for them.

But each person was unaware they had this potential. How can you instil this fact into someone who is oblivious of it?

I'm reminded of a "modern" record which currently is in my 8 Desert Island Discs:- Katy Perry's "Firework".

One of the verses goes like this:-

"You don't have to feel like a wasted space.
You're original, cannot be replaced.
If you only knew what the future holds,
After a hurricane comes a rainbow."

Each of us offers something special but it takes someone else to see it. The gospels include Jesus inviting seven of the disciples. Andrew, Peter, James & John, Philip, Nathaniel (Bartholomew in the other gospels) and Levi (Matthew). In Mark's gospel (3: 13 – 19) there is the formal appointing of the twelve. They are afterwards usually referred to as the disciples, until their transformation at Pentecost.

A “disciple” is defined as “a student learning from a teacher.”

These twelve, ordinary folk had so much to learn about this new theology, putting it into practice and relating to people. With Jesus, it was an apprenticeship preparing them for what lay ahead, whatever that was going to be!

After the crucifixion of Jesus and his resurrection they were left in limbo, but with the impetus of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost they suddenly found themselves “Apostles”. Someone who “delivers teachings to others.”

After all their training, these ordinary people found themselves at the centre of taking forward the teachings and ministry of Jesus Christ.

All the potential that Jesus saw in them, was now there for all to see – the light of Jesus Christ shining through them.

Symbolically, out of a cardboard tube erupting as a firework.

In the Gospel passage for today Jesus invites Philip to come with him. Philip is convinced who Jesus is, and wants his good friend Nathaniel to meet him. But Nathaniel comes with all his built in prejudices about people from Nazareth. He was rightly skeptical, after all they were an unruly lot, producing some die hard revolutionaries.

But Jesus saw great potential behind these doubts. To the credit of both of them, they were prepared to listen to each other and in turn share their thoughts and concerns with each other.

It's a lesson for us all in this world today when it seems too many entrenched ideas are not negotiable. It's often said that you just need to talk and engage with each other, and the fears will evaporate.

The understanding Jesus shows should encourage us each to be an apostle for conquering prejudice and enabling reconciliation.

There's a simple underlying message in this account. Jesus welcomes us all with open arms, just as we are. That's the assurance we have to offer anyone with doubts and uncertainty about what Jesus can bring.

Jesus is able to focus through our lack of confidence to see the potential we possess. It is different for each of us. May we in turn have the same gift to realise the potential others possess and harness it to serve the Lord. To light the touch paper and release the firework inside them.

The spirit of God being transformed from a spark to a flame.

The glory of Jesus shining out in a dark world. AMEN

Hymn StF 556 Just as I am, without one plea

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

- 1 Just as I am, without one plea,
 but that thy blood was shed for me,
 and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
- 2 Just as I am, and waiting not
 to rid my soul of one dark blot,
 to thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
- 3 Just as I am, though tossed about
 with many a conflict, many a doubt,
 fightings and fears within, without,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
- 4 Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
 wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
 because thy promise I believe,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Charlotte Elliott (1789 – 1871)

Prayers for Others and Ourselves

Father, we come in Christ to pray for the church, the world and ourselves.

We pray for all those who are searching for your Son, Jesus Christ, that they come to you in the sure and simple way that Jesus came into this world.

We pray that all who come to you realise you welcome them as they are and not as they think they should be.

We thank you Lord for all those who seek you with their heart, soul, mind and strength, and who go out in your name to love their neighbours as themselves.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Lord, make us your witnesses.

Fill our lives with your love and your truth that others will know we have come to know your Son, Jesus Christ for ourselves.

We are so aware that many of those around us, many of those we meet are living small, cramped and empty lives. For those who are existing when you intended them to live.

We pray that what we say and how we say it, what we do and how we do it, will enable those who do not know you to be caught up by the wonder of your love for them.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Lord, you call us to be your servants to those whom life treats harshly.

We pray that through your Holy Spirit touching our lives we may be equipped to care for the carefree, love the unlovable and enable the ungrateful to give thanks.

And Lord, you challenge us to be your channels of hope, healing and wholeness to those who are broken and defeated by life.

We pray for any we know personally to be in need of your healing touch. We bring before you those who are ill and those watch with them, for those who are lonely or afraid, those who are filled with regrets or remorse, and for those who do not know which way to turn.

Fill us with your Spirit so that through us the light of your mercy may reach into the darkest corners of life.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Lord, we pray that you set our lives ablaze with your love so that we may love, serve and hear you all the time and receive the glory you deserve. Keep our eyes fixed on Christ, the source of all faith, hope and love.

We ask these prayers in the name of 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 693

Beauty for brokenness

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

Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair,
Lord, in the suffering, this is our prayer.
Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace.
Sunrise to sunset your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives, cures for their ills,
work for the craftsman, trade for their skills.
Land for the dispossessed, rights for the weak,
voices to plead the cause of those who can't speak.

*God of the poor, friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray.
Melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain,
come, change our love from a spark to a flame.*

Refuge from cruel wars, havens from fear,
cities for sanctuary, freedoms to share.
Peace to the killing-fields, scorched earth to green,
Christ for the bitterness, his cross for the pain.

Refrain

Rest for the ravaged earth, oceans and streams.
Plundered and poisoned, our future, our dreams.
Lord, end our madness, carelessness, greed.
Make us content with the things that we need.

Refrain

Lighten our darkness, breathe on this flame,
until your justice burns brightly again.
Until the nations learn of your ways,
seek your salvation and bring you their praise.

Refrain (twice)

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

There may be a reason why all the doors seem to be closed,
It's so you can open one that leads you to the perfect road.
Like a lightning bolt you'll find your heart will glow
And when it strikes you'll know it's time to let love flow!

Hallelujah!

Amen.

