

Written Service Sunday July 7th
A service of worship for use at home
Prepared by Deacon Helen Snowball

Charity number 1134226

Speak to us Lord, through your word,
The hymns we shall sing and the prayers in our hearts.
Be the blessing that we find as we gather here, and the message we share to the glory of your name
Amen.

Hymn: - Shine Jesus Shine

1, Lord, the light of your love is shining
In the midst of the darkness, shining
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us
Set us free by the truth you now bring us
Shine on me, shine on me.

2, Lord, I come to your awesome presence
From the shadows into your radiance
By the blood I may enter your brightness
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness
Shine on me, shine on me.

Chorus

Shine, Jesus, shine
Fill this land with the Father's glory
Blaze, Spirit, blaze
Set our hearts on fire
Flow, river, flow
Flood the nations with grace and mercy
Send forth your word
Lord, and let there be light

3, As we gaze on your kingly brightness
So our faces display your likeness
Ever changing from glory to glory
Mirrored here may our lives tell your story
Shine on me, shine on me

Prayers of Adoration, Confession and Thanksgiving

Great is our God
And worthy of our praise.

This universe and everything within it
Crafted with passion, gifted in love
Great is our God and worthy of our praise.

This people - created for a purpose
To love and be loved, made for service
Great is our God, and worthy of our praise.

We come to you in our weakness and brokenness,
Aware that our lives fall short of perfection,
At times bringing a tear to your eye.
We come in humility,
Asking for mercy and forgiveness.

Remind us,
As we are tempted in our daily walk,
That your grace is all that we require
And even in our weakness your strength can be discerned.

Gracious Lord,

Your love is greater than any words can express,
pouring into hearts left open to receive,
bringing healing and restoration where there is brokenness,
and peace of mind where there is fear or stress.

You often use these vessels, fragile though we are, as the means by which your blessing flows.

For such love, undeserved but gratefully received and shared, we offer grateful thanks.

Readings

Titus 3:1-8

3 Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, 2 to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone.

3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. 8 This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

Matthew 5:14-16

14 "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Reflection

This week's theme from our discipleship pathways series – and our final one – is Live. It's about how we live as Christians, and I suppose all the other themes – pray, tell, care, worship and learn – are leading into how we live, they all inform our behaviour and show how we live as Christians, as disciples of Christ, as people on a journey.

So how do we live as Christians? How do we act as the light of the world, as instructed by Christ? Does this mean that we never swear, we never gossip, we never do anything wrong - and even if we do it doesn't matter because we are forgiven and saved?

Well let's look at how we live – regardless of religion or belief. Initially we start with our families – our parents, siblings, spouses and children. We work, and maybe we save money for the future. We go on holidays, try to have a nice house, find a job that satisfies us, a vocation that helps us to live well and hopefully provide a pension. You may look at how you spend your money, whether you wish to save something to leave to the next generation as inheritance, or you may just want to spend it all on yourselves- I'm not here to judge! I think generally speaking people are good – people want to live a safe, happy life. They want to be able to feed their families, put a roof over their heads, live in love beside others.

So, what's the difference if we live as Christians? Don't Christians still do that? Yes, we do that, we still want to look after our families, of course we do. But, we also do things for others too. Now, this isn't to say that those outside of the church don't help others too, they also donate to foodbanks and work in charity shops etc, but I want us to think about what the difference is, why we as Christians do those things. The difference is that Christ is at the centre of it, and

recognised as being at the centre. But when it is started in the church environment, then it becomes a Christian endeavour – because the people involved have ‘invoked’ – if that’s the right word – Christ into the centre of it. Christ is in those situations already of course, but when they are being worked on by Christians, who recognise that Christ is there, it becomes all the more powerful because of testimony, because of faith, and because of showing how we live for and with Christ. The people have seen that this thing needs to be done to help, and so they have gone to church in prayer and to God and said ‘how do we help with this?’ They have then listened to God, and waited for the Holy Spirit to show them what needs to happen next, and they have followed.

In the short verses from Matthew, we heard Jesus telling his followers to be the light of the world, and that instruction feeds down to us too. Through the ages, people have needed to be light – to be the beacon that others can see otherwise the stories would be lost. The knowledge that we have of Christ would not have filtered down to us. We only know about Jesus because those people who were there were the light that the people needed to see. They somehow got people to listen, to wonder at their faith, and to ask questions. At some point people have said ‘we need this writing down for future generations’ and so some people did that. The first disciples had the light of Jesus in them, and it showed - people saw that they were the light of the world, and they asked questions – ‘who is this Jesus you follow?’ ‘Why do you follow him?’ ‘What’s in it for you?’ And in that vein, we must also follow. We must be the light of the world now, so that the light of Christ will be seen in us. And people might see the light of Christ in us by how we live, how we behave.

A question for you – is living a Christian life the same as being Christlike? For me, it isn’t, because when I think I’m supposed to be Christlike it just makes me feel a little bit sick! You all know me, I’ve been here for 5 years now and you know I am not the most confident of people, but to say that I might be Christlike, is just silly. We all make mistakes, we gossip or we spend too much money, we don’t donate as much as we should, and we know that all those things would never happen to Christ. However, we are not Christ, and the only thing we can do, is try to live as Christ would, as Christ instructed. There is nothing more we can do than that. We try. We read the Bible, and we try to understand what Jesus said, and then we do our best. Maybe Christlike is too hard for us to try, we get scared that we’ll fail, so we try to be as Christian as we can. We serve, feed the hungry, visit the prisoner, try to help where we can, which gets us closer to being like Christ.

In the reading from Titus, we hear the writer telling us to be obedient, to do whatever is good, to be peaceful and considerate – to be gentle. Sadly, we still live in malice and hate, and the world is not at peace, there is envy and hate. The reading ends by telling us that doing good is excellent and profitable for everyone. And we know that don’t we? It is good to help people because we’ve helped people, but it is also good to be able to know that we have made a difference, whether by handing out a bag of shopping to someone at the foodbank, or handing out cups of tea to the guests at the wellbeing café, we get a sense of our own personal wellbeing, knowing that we have helped. This reading tells us something of how we are supposed to behave because through Christ we are forgiven and saved, and so we need to act like it. Others need to see how we live and why we live as Christians, so that they can maybe wonder, and ask the questions.

These discipleship pathways that we’ve been looking at, have come out of the initiative from the Church, the Methodist Way of Life, and I hope you’ve seen that it isn’t really different to a Christian way of life, we just do it as Methodists. Still Christians, but we follow the justice seeking initiatives of the Methodist Church which came to us from John and Charles Wesley. The Methodist Way of Life is not new, it’s not something radical, its just a simple way of setting out what we believe and who we are, and how we show what we believe and who we are. We need to show all this, in order to be Christ’s light in the world. Perhaps the Christian way of life could simply become ‘a way of life’ for all people, wouldn’t that be wonderful?

These discipleship pathways that we’ve been thinking about for the last few weeks, and the ones we’ve looked at over the last couple of years in this circuit, are ways in which we can increase our

discipleship, help to focus us on Christ's teaching and how to let others see what it means to be a Christian.

Jesus says in Matthew 5 that '*...you are the light of the world...*' and he wasn't just talking to the people standing near him. He meant us. He meant *you*. We are to be the light of the world, to show people what it means to be Christian, to be followers of Christ, to love Christ. Christ is the light of the world, and through him we are to show that light, to be the light.

Prayers of Intercession

God of justice and peace,
You call us to act justly, but our lives tell of how much our justice is rationed.
You call us to live in peace, but we keep guns and bombs by our side, wringing our hands at the state of the world.
We have failed to admit our direct or indirect role in the way your world is tearing itself apart.
We have closed our ears to people's cries for justice and our eyes to faces that are hungry.

God of justice and peace,
Help us to pursue justice as if our very survival depends on it.
Help us to know that only a reconciled human race can prepare the way for your kingdom.
Forgive us for neglecting the urgency of your call for justice.
Forgive us for thinking we are immune to the consequences of war and injustice.
Help us to amend that we have been, and to live by the rules of your kingdom of peace and justice.
Amen.

As we look forward a government making a new start with new promises, we ask that you Lord will give them wisdom, help them to fulfil their promises, to serve the people, and to seek a better place for all to live.

And for ourselves, we ask that the light of Christ might shine out of us, that we are seen as people of Christ, bearing his light to others.

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,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn Christ be our Light

1, Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people, .
light for the world to see. .

*Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.*

2, Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair
Your word alone has power to save us
Make us your living voice
Christ be our light!

3, Longing for food, many are hungry. .
Longing for water, many still thirst. .
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.
Christ be our light!

4, Longing for shelter, many are homeless
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.
Christ be our light!

5, Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.
Christ be our light!

Bernadette Farrell

Blessing

Bless us with more determination than cynicism,
More resolve than despair,
More passion than apathy.

Bless us with restless spirits,
Deep longings for justice,
Resolve for equality.

Bless us with the desire for change,
Wisdom to see how to realise it,
And energy to make it happen.

Bless us with a fire to live as Christ did,
To serve and help, to love and strive for peace
To show our Christian lives, that Christ lives within each and every one of us.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord, in the name of Christ. Amen.