



Worship 6 June 2021

Welcome & Call to Worship

Welcome to worship on the second Sunday after Pentecost. This Sunday we will gather in the Weoley Hill church in the morning and Bournville church in the afternoon while for the time being we will only meet for worship at Weoley Castle Community church on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of the month. But why do we pause a while on a Sunday morning, or whenever it suits us if we worship at home? Just to remind ourselves.....

At the end of his autobiography Nelson Mandela wrote: *“I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom come responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not ended.”* We are also on a journey of faith and faithfulness, we who “for freedom have been made free” by Jesus Christ. With our freedom come responsibilities too and our long walk is not ended. But we need moments to rest, to look forward, to look back and to appreciate the present. We do so as we thank and praise God in our worship.

Hymn

Stand up and bless the Lord

Opening Prayer

Gracious and loving God, we bless you and give you thanks for your steadfast love and faithfulness. As we continue to walk in the midst of troubling times we thank you for your leading and guiding us, giving us courage and strength to climb the hills we face in life. We trust in your goodness and your ever presence with us. We now come to offer our prayers and praise, and to seek your renewing love as we listen to your word (and as we share at your table). Bless this time of worship and

may your Spirit bind us together, wherever we are. In Jesus' name we pray.

Scripture Reading

Mark 3: 20-35

Reflection

"Home at last. No more mountain climbing, ducking into tents, bonding with the boys. No more daily specials at the village café. No more long lines of admirers awaiting an autograph. Finally, a few minutes of peace and quiet. A hearty meal. A good glass of wine. A long, hot bath followed by a good night's sleep. By the end of Mark 3, Jesus is home at last" (Gary Charles in Preaching Mark in two voices). Jesus is home, but he is certainly not alone. At least not for long. Because no sooner does he sit down for a meal or the crowd have gathered again. People cannot leave Jesus alone. And it is not only the usual crowd that has gathered but his family and the scribes who have come down from Jerusalem. And what does his family do? Welcome him with open arms? No, they feel rather embarrassed because they wonder if Jesus has lost his mind.....Lost his mind as he challenged and provoked the political and religious authorities with his words and actions. So they feel they have to intervene, to call him to his senses. But that is not all. The scribes say that Jesus has not lost his mind but, worse, is demon-possessed! What a home-coming for Jesus! He is not only prevented from enjoying a good meal and some well-deserved rest, he is accused of being possessed by "Beelzebul" or "Satan." Of course, Jesus shows how ridiculous the accusation is by telling the parable of the binding of the strong man. *"Satan is the strong man who has ruled the world with impunity for centuries. I am the thief in the night who has come into the strong man's house to plunder it. But before I can take what is his, I must tie him up, bind him. Every exorcism, every healing, every teaching that I do is one more link in the chain that binds him"* Jesus says. *"My commission is to change the world so that it looks more like the kingdom of God that is, even now, in my person and ministry, breaking in."* Jesus' family is concerned and asks to speak to him. But what does Jesus say when he is told that his mother and brothers are waiting for him outside? He asks those inside the house, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And then without waiting for an answer he

looks around and answers his own question: “Here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.” The tribal and family relations, which were the core identity of the people of that time, and often still are today, are seemingly thrown out the window by this statement of Jesus. And that is quite extraordinary. How is it that Jesus seems to devalue that which was considered so important, so valuable to the people then, and still today? Jesus appears to say that the family relationship is superseded by the relationship with God. Do we have to hear this as a rejection of the family? Looking around him Jesus says, “You are my family. You. The ones here sitting with me, who are willing to give up everything to do the will of God, to change this world so that it looks like God’s kingdom of justice and peace. You who are seeking to do right and make right, wherever there is wrong. You are my brothers and sisters.” *“Jesus family is composed of those who choose to be with him around him and to follow his mandates, not those who come from his bloodline.”* And in a sense, Jesus’ statement on family is a definition of the church, of the ties that bind us to each other in community. As Jesus tells it, the family of God is the people that gather together, irrespective of genetic links, cultural agreements and mutual admiration. We are linked, bound together, by our common faith in God and our discipleship of the one who has called us together and who calls us to be brother and sister to each other. Notwithstanding all of its imperfection, the church is a family of very diverse people seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Or, as the hymn we are going to sing says it, we are “one great fellowship of love” and “all Christ-like souls are one” in Christ.

Hymn

In Christ there is no East or West

Prayers & Lord’s Prayer

Gracious and loving God, we thank you for bringing us together from different backgrounds and places, to be your family in Christ. Connected as a fellowship in the church, brothers and sisters in Christ, we pray for each other, for the world and all its people.

We pray for all areas in the world where deep divisions run between ethnic and religious groups or where past history has left deep marks of

hurt. For those involved in trying to resolve conflict, we pray for courage, wisdom and humanity. And for those who are victims of violence or are being persecuted, we pray for peace, for reconciliation, for healing.

We pray for our communities where different backgrounds and life experiences shape different social and political views. We pray that we can make common cause for the good of the community, that all may have a fair chance to lead flourishing lives.

We pray for our church and the churches in our neighbourhood, especially as we have been “holed up” during the ongoing pandemic and have not been able to share activities. May we continue to appreciate that while we are different denominations, we are all your family in Christ.

We pray for our friends in Christ in our congregation and we lift up to you those who are in particular need.....

We pray for our families, the people whose lives by birth and by choice are intertwined with our own. We name them.....we lift them in love, pray for their wellbeing and ask for forgiveness when we have failed them

And we pray together the prayer Jesus taught us....OUR FATHER

Offering

God of grace, we hear your call to generous giving in the way you meet our needs each day, and in the peace you give which passes understanding. Having received so much, we offer our time, talents and money for your kingdom of peace and justice. Bless our gifts for the work of your church.

Communion (at Weoley Hill)

Hymn

Brother, sister let me serve you

Blessing

Go into a new week, joined together by the love of God, faithfully following Jesus Christ by the strength of the Holy Spirit. Amen.