



St. Stephens Uniting Church

Worship Sunday 4th October 2020 prepared by Rosemary Wray

Our Call to Worship

Jesus stand among us in thy risen power, let this time of worship be a hallowed hour

(Methodist Hymn 684}

A Prayer of Approach

Lord God, as we journey towards the goal you set before us, we see glimpses of who you are, often too deep and unimaginable to grasp fully the depth of your being. What we see and feel spurs us on in our journey to discover more of you. Amen.

Hymn 8 TIS – Psalm 19 - God's law is perfect

Our Prayer of Confession

God of the journey of life, the mystery of our very being, we confess that the journey we take gets disrupted and we get side-tracked. We go off on wild goose chases that lead us nowhere, up blind alleys and into bad and barren places. We find our way back to you in sorrow for our failings and in penitence of our wanderings. May we be enriched by your welcome, relieved by your forgiveness and comforted by your all-embracing love. Amen – and thanks be to God.

The Old Testament Bible Reading Exodus 20 1-4, 7-9 and 12-20 (NIV)

And God spoke all these words: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work,

Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour. You shall not covet your neighbour's house, you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour." When the people saw the thunder and lightning and hear the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die." Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid, God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning."

Let us sing with gusto **Hymn 594 TIS** – Fight the good fight, with all thy might

Thoughts on our Bible reading

Exodus means departure, and departure to me means going on a journey, and at present we are all going on some kind of journey. We are living in strange times, there maybe not much of a journey for us at present within our allotted 5 kilometres, but we will accept it and try to keep within the rules and hopefully restrictions will ease again. I personally find the time has passed quite quickly but not all that pleasantly some times. Some of us will have missed out on holidays, missed out on celebrating birthdays, special birthdays for some. I wonder how many birthday cakes have Thursday Ladies missed out on. Tom and I even missed celebrating a special anniversary the way we had planned. As well as happy times there have been sad times that we have missed the comfort of someone or something. The rules that are put in place are sometimes hard to remember and follow. Some say rules are meant to be broken, maybe not broken but changed for the better. Rules are often changed, the road laws, Council laws, and dare I say football rules, etc.

Now what about these 10 commandments. They are God's rules for his people to live by and these 10 are the most famous, they are moral, civil and religious laws to live by. I found Mary's Musings (featured in September, 2020, Diary) very enlightening, but I couldn't get my head around the last bit on only 9 commandments. I put Exodus 20 verses 3 and 4 together and still ended up with 10. Also I didn't know or realise there were more commandments.

Moses was a prophet, a person who spoke God's message, chosen by God to lead the people out of slavery in Egypt to another land, in approximately 1250 BC. This was a journey to take nearly 40 years. Moses had a good relationship with God and when the people presented complaints or problems to Moses he took these complaints and problems to God. Remember the undrinkable water, also the lack of food? God delivered.

Now he delivers the 10 Commandments, no other gods or idols, not to misuse His name, keep the Sabbath holy, six days of work, honour parents, do not murder, commit adultery, steal, give false testimony against neighbours, do not covet (envy, crave, yearn, etc.). I'm sure we can all live by these commandments, laws, rules. If we break any one of these commandments, we devalue God, others and ourselves. We don't have to change them.

But wait a minute the New Testament brings us Christ's new commandments. Christ was asked which of the 10 commandments given to Moses was the greatest (Mat 22 v36-39). In short, love your Lord with heart, soul and mind, (strength was also mentioned in Mark's gospel) the greatest and first commandment, also to love your neighbour as yourself, the second commandment. Only 2 now and If we abide by these two the other commandments all fall into place. Do we love our neighbours as much as we love ourselves? A minister friend of mine was once asked by a parishioner that he couldn't always love his neighbour and the minister said 'Well try and follow the old commandments!' If we find it hard to forgive and forget – choose one.

What does it all boil down to? One word – LOVE. Love with heart, soul and mind fully to everyone. We will receive our strength from the Lord to do this. Thanks be to God.

A Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving

Lord God, we are all so different, each our own being, and yet you love and care for us all. You nurture and protect us. How can we not be thankful to you for all that the journey with you offers? We thank you that you guide us in unexpected ways, to find the right way of

living. We thank you that when we wander, you draw us back to you, give us new direction and encourage us to follow where you lead. We thank you that you know our individual needs and quirks, and yearn for us to be on the journey of life with you. We thank you that the pains of life can be overshadowed by the joy of walking with you. For all these blessings and more, we give you thanks and praise. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer – Our Father, who art in Heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Let us join again in singing **Hymn 105 TIS** – Let all the world in every corner sing: My God and King!

A Departing Prayer

Almighty God, we journey forward in our Christian life, its foundations, full of all that has gone before, are part of the scaffold of our lives. Some of it can be seen by others, some only by ourselves, some is very obvious, some more hidden. But it is there, it is a personal journey – no one else's is quite the same – but you know it and you know all of us, and we trust you to guide us, to give us the strength, the courage and the persistence we need to follow where you lead even if the path is tough. Be our guide, we pray. Amen.

A Departing Hymn 699 TIS - A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another as I have loved you.

Other readings for today – Matthew 21 33-46 and Philippians 3 1-14

A Prayer of Intercession chosen for its relevance for our current situation

(This prayer was prepared for a celebration of the Jubilee of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II held at Milford Haven Church of England.)

Almighty Lord, grant us pardon and forgiveness of all our sins, we come to you for forgiveness and peace, be gracious to us and bless us.

We remember before you the development in science, medicine and technology of this past year, may we use this knowledge responsibly. Lord in your mercy - Hear our prayer

We remember before you the political life of our country and we pray for those elected to govern, for those who make policy decisions, may we use our freedoms wisely. Lord in your mercy - Hear our prayer.

We remember before you the life of our communities, we pray for all those whose work builds up community life, for those who need help, for those who live in fear of isolation, for the refugees in our midst and the victims of racism and prejudice. Lord in your mercy - Hear our prayer.

We remember all people, young and old, with dreams, concerns and anxieties, for those with responsibility on upbringing, education and employment. As we grasp the opportunities of today, may we shape the future well. Lord in your mercy - Hear our prayer.

Great God, we celebrate the rich diversity of our country, the different cultures and faiths that make up our society. We pray for people of all cultures and faiths that together we may continue to build a home that welcomes all, we seek your justice. Lord in your mercy - Hear our prayer.

We place what's past, today and our future into your hands. Accept our prayers according to your gracious will, in the name of Jesus Christ our redeemer. Amen