

Leeds South and West Methodist Circuit
Written Service for Sunday 18th February 2024

Hymn StF 20 Be Still

Prayers of Praise and Confession

Creator of all,
Sustainer of all,
Saviour of all,
Your glory and majesty
are beyond our understanding,
Your power too awesome to behold.
And yet your love enfolds us as a gentle breeze.
Saviour of all ,
Sustainer of all,
Creator of all,
We bless your holy name

Amen.

Father God,
you are the one who leads us
from darkness into light,
from captivity into freedom,
from anxiety into peace,
from despair into joy.
Yet we long to break free,
choosing independence,
convinced of our own wisdom,
forgetting your love and grace.
Forgive us,
draw close to us,
embrace us once again
in your loving arms,
and enable us to follow you
in worship and grateful service
each day of our lives

Amen

Reflect on where you have experienced God this week?

Prayer of thanks:

Light of light,
Lord of Lords,
God of this world and the next,
We give you thanks
for the promise of this day,
We give you thanks
for the challenge of this day,
We give you thanks
for the blessings of this day.

Light of light,
Lord of Lords,
God of this world and the next,
We give you thanks.

Amen.

Reading – Genesis 9:8-17

Mark 1:9-15

Reflection:

It was a cold day in March a couple of years ago. My son had asked me over the previous months if I would baptise him. As a baby he and his sister both had dedication and thanksgiving services but we wanted them to choose to be baptised when they were ready. My son chose to be baptised by full immersion and he knew the river he wanted to be baptised in – the River Wharfe between Otley and Ilkley – a place we both love. Arrangements were made, a day was chosen, family members and church members were praying for us and off we set. We parked up and walked along the slightly muddy banks of the Wharfe on a beautifully bright but fresh Spring morning. We were both in shorts and I was wearing my short-sleeved clerical shirt with collar and also the cross of the Methodist Diaconal Order. I let my son walk alone along the banks to pray, prepare himself and see where he felt he wanted this to take place. I also spent this time in prayer and preparation. He then called me and said he was ready.

With My wife and daughter looking on, my son and I stepped into what we soon realized was the coldest water in the North of England. It was absolutely freezing. We waded out to waist deep, both with chests puffed out, arms out and short sharp breaths as the freezing water chilled us. We stood there for a moment and tried to acclimate to the water, but all that happened was our legs went numb.

Anyway, we followed the liturgy in the methodist worship book and I read from my pocket Bible, my son made his promises, accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and saviour and was dunked three times for the trinity and then had a cross on his forehead. He came up spluttering and huffing and puffing each time as the frozen water iced him to the bone.

We hugged and sang a verse of Amazing Grace and then waded – frozen and shivering back to the banks. It was at that point that my numb legs chose not to work and instead of moving forward in a gentle gliding motion they stayed firmly stuck in the mud and I fell head long into the icy water, flailing around like a baby Walrus it's first time in the water, much to the hysterics of my wife and daughter (who filmed the whole thing). I managed to get to my feet and to get myself back on not so dry land, with all the grace of an freezing, inebriated flamingo.

I'm pretty sure that it didn't go like that for Jesus and John the Baptist in the River Jordan - Or at least the scriptures left that bit out. But for my Son it was still a very moving experience, the culmination of months of prayer and searching the scriptures, a time of listening and responding to the grace of our loving creator God. He is very proud of the fact that he was baptised in the river Wharfe in Yorkshire, up to our waists and surrounded by nature, and every time we drive past the place, we both smile.

I wonder if many of you can remember when you were baptised. I don't because I was baptised when I was a baby, but I do remember when I chose to truly accept God's offer of forgiveness through Jesus Christ and when I decided to follow God's call, I also remember when I was made a member of the Methodist church and when I had an experience that I would say was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. I never heard a voice say, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." But I do know it and feel it, when God said it to Jesus he meant it to include all of us, we are all God's children who he dearly loves and with whom he is well pleased. I hope you know that. if you have never been baptised maybe this is something you would like to think about, I'm sure you could speak to a minister about it. And if you were baptised, then reflect on the fact that you are God's chosen child, he dearly loves you and with you he is well pleased, no matter how unworthy you may feel, you are loved, valued and precious. God's love for us doesn't depend on our worthiness, or on any actions of ours, it is free and unconditional. I pray that you feel it and are strengthened by the Holy Spirit to respond to the call of your loving creator God.

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession:

God who shows no partiality,
show your favouritism on all your people.
Send forth your justice for all to see.
Save us your people.
Empower us to preach and testify to your great love and mercy.

God who makes and keeps covenant with your people,
You called us to be a light to the nations,
to open the eyes that are blind,
to set the prisoners free,
Help us to answer your call that these things come to pass.

God of grace and glory,
We pray for those who suffer from pains and sorrows.
We pray for those whose hearts are broken.
We pray for those whose families are fractured.
We pray for those whose lives are ravaged by war.
We pray for those who struggle with poverty, and starvation
We pray for our brother and sisters in Christ
who are being martyred and tortured for their beliefs.

Thank you for hearing our prayers.
Thank you for pouring out your Spirit on your son
and pouring your spirit out on us too.
May we too hear you say to us this day that;
“This is my son, my daughter, the Beloved,
with whom I am well pleased.”

Amen

*written by Rev Abi, and posted on the **RevGalBlogPals** website.*

Lord's Prayer

Hymn StF 317 At the Name of Jesus.

Grace

Prayers from Faith and worship Website unless otherwise stated.