

**WORSHIP at ST JOHN'S**  
**Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021 @ 10:00a.m.**

Good morning and welcome to worship however and wherever you are sharing at this time.

**Call to Worship**

The love of God unites us all; fills us with His Spirit, giving us ears to hear and hearts to respond to His Word.

The Collect for this particular Sunday:

Let us pray.

Boundless, O God, is your saving power;  
Your harvest reaches to the ends of the earth.  
Set our hearts on fire for your kingdom  
And put on our lips the good news of peace.  
Grant us perseverance as heralds of your Gospel  
And joy as disciples of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord;  
Who lives and reigns with you,  
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
One God for ever and ever. **AMEN.**

**Our first song is “Spirit of holiness, wisdom and faithfulness”**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xkilo263Gkl&ab\\_channel=Jubilate](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xkilo263Gkl&ab_channel=Jubilate)

Spirit of holiness, wisdom and faithfulness,  
wind of the Lord, blowing strongly and free:  
strength of our serving and joy of our worshipping  
Spirit of God, bring your fullness to me!

1 You came to interpret and teach us effectively  
all that the Saviour has spoken and done;  
to glorify Jesus is all your activity  
promise and gift of the Father and Son:

Spirit of holiness...

2 You came with your gifts to supply all our poverty,  
pouring your love on the church in her need;  
you came with your fruit for our growth to maturity,  
richly refreshing the souls that you feed:

Spirit of holiness...

Christopher Idle  
© Christopher Idle/Jubilate Hymns Ltd

**Readings**

Ezekiel 2 vv. 1 – 6

**2** He said to me, “Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you.” <sup>2</sup> As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.

<sup>3</sup> He said: “Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have been in revolt against me to this very day. <sup>4</sup> The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says.’ <sup>5</sup> And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious people—they will know that a prophet has been among them. **6** And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid, though briars and thorns are all around you and you live among scorpions. Do not be afraid of what they say or be terrified by them, though they are a rebellious people.

Mark 6 vv. 1 – 13

**6** Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. <sup>2</sup> When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

“Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? <sup>3</sup> Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph,<sup>[a]</sup> Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.

<sup>4</sup> Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honour except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.” <sup>5</sup> He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. <sup>6</sup> He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. <sup>7</sup> Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits.

<sup>8</sup> These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. <sup>9</sup> Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. <sup>10</sup> Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. <sup>11</sup> And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”

<sup>12</sup> They went out and preached that people should repent. <sup>13</sup> They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

## HOMILY

*“They went out and preached that people should repent”*

Some thirty-one years ago, in a rather wet Cardiff I was ordained as a presbyter in the Methodist Church. I was charged to preach the Gospel; share the Sacraments and take care of the flock wherever I was sent in the Name of the Living God, under the auspices of the Methodist Church.

*“We will not teach you how to be ministers, but we will give you the tools”* rang the words of my senior tutor in college and they have stayed with me ever since, for John was a wise man, from a humble background and greatly respected by all who encountered him.

He knew what it was to ‘be at the coal face’... to take the word of the Living God to all, whatever the circumstance, sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit.

As students we discovered that there was never any magic formula in doing the work of the Lord, but there was around us the power of Jesus in whose name we were called and in whose power we ‘gave the Word’.

Yet this was to be more than ‘just’ preaching the Word as I had been doing as a Local Preacher for some twelve years, this was to be a face to face encounter with folk who had needs, concerns and were in the middle of many concerns.

There were baptisms and funerals, weddings and many pastoral visits and equally there were times when I had to try to stop and seek time to be with God, for the roller-coaster of ministerial work became time consuming and challenging in body, mind and spirit.

Looking back at some of my diary entries of those years I wonder how I managed to cope from one weekend to the next ..... But, by the Grace of God I came through it and in the process learned a whole lot about the God I was called to serve ‘in whatever circumstance’.

Like the situation of being confronted by a very angry relative on a doorstep as I tried to conduct a funeral call when she screamed at me, *“Isn’t He a rotten God ... well, isn’t He?”*

She had lost her granddaughter in a horrific road accident..... No text book gave me any clue how to begin to deal with this, but God’s love did.

***“Do not be afraid of them or their words”*** ..... those words from Ezekiel were so powerful in that context ..... the Lord was in that situation and His words came and were shared.

Each encounter becomes part of a personal testimony and it would be totally unacceptable to edit out the difficult and awkward bits to make it all 'look nice and simple', for without the 'warts and all', one cannot bear testimony to the love and power of a Living Saviour Jesus Christ.

It would be oh so easy to say, *"This is NOT what I signed up for"*, seek to distance oneself from all similar encounters, but then again, as has been said many times previous and by a whole variety of people, *"Jesus never said that it would be easy, but He did say that He would be with us always and in all situations"*. Such is the power of His love and His desire for us to succeed as His representatives here on earth, whatever we seek to make of it, rightly or wrongly.

Yet I have found too, that this 'ministry' is about receiving too.

I have been so fortunate in encountering a vast variety of folk these past 30 years, and each story is a gem in itself.

I have sat by firesides; on the end of piers watching fishing craft coming and going; by bedsides in hospice and hospital as well as at home. Been with those who walk up the highest mountain and fish the deepest depths and through these engagements I have found the work of the Lord in many a heart although few will actually acknowledge such by their own words.

Like Maggie who sat in her chair close by a roaring fire, her fingers arthritic in posture but her mind still 'sharp as a tack' as she recalled gutting fish on a stormy pier with many others, placing the fish in crans for the southern market and then at the end of the day, sleeping some four or six in a bed, singing their spiritual songs and sharing the love of God through the message of those who had taught them in Sunday School and at home.

Faith was the bedrock of their lives and living, not just personally, but in community too.

Whatever the circumstance, God's love sustained them and bore them through. I learned so much -----  
---- being ministered too is such a humbling experience.

As we see in Mark's Gospel, the disciples being sent out went to situations in which they had never been involved, performing acts of compassion and calling everyone to be aware of the message from God on clarity of body, mind and spirit brought about by 'repentance', changing the direction of living and coming closer to God in the process. But Jesus at the very outset realised that not everyone, nor every situation would be a favourable one and that opposition would be rife in many places, and how right He was and how right that still is for ministers and those who seek to take that message today to the masses.

The situation is not helped by those who are in power and authority and many, too many, see only that and not the beating, loving, caring heart of a Church who seeks to live out its great commission, to reach all in Jesus' Name.

***"Do not be afraid of what they say or terrified by them"***

During this seemingly never ending pandemic, my heart has been warmed by the innovation shown by so many folk in a whole variety of communities, both large and small, as to how that message of the Love of God is being shared. I feel sometimes that many churches are challenging major broadcasters in 'how to get that message across', and to do it well and indeed how many folk not previously interested in the

Church or its business have been brought a message of hope and fellowship they may never had experience of before this time.

I am sure that the great Christian leaders of our time would be well and truly chuffed at how imagination; innovation; determination along with a whole range of other things have gathered up the message and sent it to the ends of the earth.

Talk about fulfilling the Pentecost decree to 'take the message beyond the confines of home, and into the world' Well there is no denying that that has truly begun.

But what of ministry in future days? Are we going to be content with 'bums on seats', or is there indeed something much more to use and look forward to?

Radio and television were opened up for me in many ways in a number of communities and with so many wonderful folk, but technology is taking us all far beyond static premises or positions, and using God-given talent acquired in secular situations, God and His Word will indeed march on.

We are all part of this story, whether it is from a pulpit; in a Bible Study group or prayer group; sharing in small fellowship groups; encouraging others to read God's Word or simply 'telling OUR story as it is'.

God has changed so many lives; how did He change yours?

I bet others would love to know!

### **Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession**

Loving God we thank you that in all times and all places you have called people to share the Good News, by words of encouragement and of challenge but also by lives lived in love and care. We thank you for the training and passing on of skills both within the Church and in the wider world; but we thank you too that you provide the help of your spirit that we may truly speak and act in Christ's name and power and not our own; and that you are there when we do not know what to do or say or would find the situation beyond our own abilities. There are so many too who do not realise they are ministering by their love and care, and we thank you for them. In these difficult times, we thank you for the new technologies that have enabled this ministry of sharing and caring to continue and even brought new people to hear. **Amen.**

God of Good News, just as your son sent out the disciples, we pray today for all people who share the Good News; for all those in ministry and leadership within the church, particularly those newly in leadership and those newly ordained; for all those making themselves vulnerable by sharing of you.

### **Strengthen and protect your people sharing the Gospel.**

All around the world there are conflicts and tensions— hatred, bombings, corruption, some we here of occasionally others pass us by entirely. We pray for all those caught up in such situations, and for the people working to bring about reconciliation. We keep a moment's quiet to bring specific places to mind and before you O God. ...

### **Diffuse hatred and bring your peace to the world.**

We pray for all countries struggling to cope with the pandemic due to lack of resources and vaccines and for relations between nations, that they may be supportive and not comparative or even worse antagonistic. May we think more how we can protect one another rather than about our freedoms and where we want to go on holiday.

We continue to pray for those suffering directly from COVID, ... those with the disease or its after effects, their families and the bereaved; over stretched leaders, workers and volunteers; the isolated and the worried.

**Restore health, comfort and console.**

We pray too for those more indirectly effected, ... those with other health concerns; those who may have lost their jobs due to the pandemic or have been furloughed and are worrying about rent arrears, particularly as furlough begins to wind down.

**Bring reassurance; transform lives.**

When the disciples were sent out, they were instructed to take no food with them. We pray for all people who live each day not knowing where their next meal is coming from. For all those who rely on aid or food banks to put a meal on the table. We pray too for those who run and support food banks and for those in authority as they seek to respond to the need and the conditions that set up the need.

**Feed and nourish those in need.**

Lord, in you we have freedom. We pray for our Prime Minister, the government, particularly the new Secretary of State for Health in England, and all advisors as they deliberate on lifting restrictions. May they be guided by the needs to protect one another and the need to learn to live with the disease and not by any short term populism.

**Give wisdom and guidance in all things.**

In a moment's quiet let us bring to our minds and hold before you O God, firstly those known to us in need (we continue to pray for our ministers, Annie and Adele and their families) and then for ourselves, for any needs we have but also that we may be people who respond to the call to share Good News by words and caring action. ...

We bring our prayers together in the word's Jesus taught us

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen**

**Our final song is "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine"**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuyf1YQvcwY&list=PLD082BF0AA7766972&t=10s>

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Blessèd assurance, Jesus is mine :<br>O what a foretaste of glory divine !<br>Heir of salvation, purchase of God ;<br>born of his Spirit, washed in his blood :<br><i>This is my story, this is my song,<br/>praising my Saviour all the day long.<br/>This is my story, this is my song,<br/>praising my Saviour all the day long.</i> | 2 | Perfect submission, perfect delight,<br>visions of rapture burst on my sight ;<br>angels descending bring from above<br>echoes of mercy, whispers of love :         |
|   |   | 3 | Perfect submission, all is at rest,<br>I in my Saviour am happy and blest —<br>watching and waiting, looking above,<br>filled with his goodness, lost in his love : |

Frances Jane van Alstyne, (Fanny Crosby) (1820–1915)

**Final Prayer and blessing**

Now may the God who has called us, equip us all to do His will in whatever circumstance; fill us with His Spirit and walk with us each and every day.

May the Lord bless us and keep us and be with all for whom we love and pray.

AMEN.

Service prepared by Rev. Malcolm Newman. The prayers of intercession were prepared by Tim Rogers, with some material from © ROOTS for Churches Ltd 2021 [www.rootsontheweb.com](http://www.rootsontheweb.com). The song credit's appear with the songs above and are reproduced under CCLI licence no. 5347. The bible passages are from *Holy Bible, New International Version® Anglicized, NIV® Copyright © 1979, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.*