



# The Methodist Church In Ireland

## Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> August, 'Our Hope'

This short act of worship has been prepared so that you can spend some moments with God, knowing that other people in your local congregation and beyond are sharing in this same act of worship with you.

### Opening Prayer

Hallowed be your name. Father of heaven and earth, we have gathered today as your faithful. You have kept us in your presence through the week. Today, we come to glorify you and thank you for all that you have done. As we begin today's service sheet, each in our homes, we strive against the devil and pray that only your will be done on earth. We ask that you bless us and future generations with your presence. Thank you, Lord, for hearing our prayers today

### Hymn: Be Still

*Sing/read/proclaim the words of this wonderful song*

Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
The holy One, is here;  
Come bow before him now  
With reverence and fear  
In him no sin is found  
We stand on holy ground.  
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
The holy One, is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord  
Is shining all around;  
He burns with holy fire,  
With splendour he is crowned:  
How awesome is the sight  
Our radiant king of light!  
Be still, for the glory of the Lord  
Is shining all around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord  
Is moving in this place:  
He comes to cleanse and heal,  
To minister his grace -

No work too hard for him.  
In faith receive from him.  
Be still, for the power of the Lord  
Is moving in this place.

*David J Evans (b. 1957)*

### Exodus 3: 1-15

#### Moses and the Burning Bush

**3** Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. **2** There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. **3** So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."

**4** When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

And Moses said, "Here I am."

**5** "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." **6** Then he said, "I am the God of your father,<sup>[a]</sup> the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

<sup>7</sup>The LORD said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. <sup>8</sup>So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. <sup>9</sup>And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. <sup>10</sup>So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

<sup>11</sup>But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

<sup>12</sup>And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you<sup>[a]</sup> will worship God on this mountain.”

<sup>13</sup>Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”

<sup>14</sup>God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.<sup>[a]</sup> This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

<sup>15</sup>God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD,<sup>[a]</sup> the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.’

“This is my name forever,  
the name you shall call me  
from generation to generation.

### Let us pray

Eternal God, in whom we live and move and have our being, whose face is hidden from us by our sins, and whose mercy we forget in the blindness of our hearts: cleanse us from all our offenses, and deliver us from proud thoughts and vain desires, that with reverent and humble hearts we may draw near to you, confessing our faults, confiding in your grace, and finding in you our refuge and strength; through Jesus Christ your Son. Amen

## Matthew 16: 21-28

### Jesus Predicts His Death

<sup>21</sup>From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

<sup>22</sup>Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

<sup>23</sup>Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

<sup>24</sup>Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup>For whoever wants to save their life<sup>[a]</sup> will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. <sup>26</sup>What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? <sup>27</sup>For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

<sup>28</sup>“Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

### Reflection

Quizzed by Jesus (16:13-20) about the wider public’s perception of his identity, the disciples say that Jesus is a prophet but more than a prophet too. He is the anointed one of God, gifted with God’s power, a power Jesus now turns over to his followers.

No doubt the disciples must have been buzzing with excitement in the wake of this revelatory moment. They must have been dazzled by the fact that theirs would be the generation that would bear witness to the culmination of so many of God’s promises. The cries of slaves in Egypt, the yearnings of exiles in Babylon, the prayers of Roman subjects: these are all being heard by Jesus.

God's anointed will respond in a way that will transform the world and set things right. Nothing will ever be the same from this moment forward.

In this excitement, they get it half right. The world is shifting under their feet but not as they or we would have expected.

After all, the narrative seems to give little room for jubilation. Jesus does not pause for a moment of revelry when his disciples apprehend correctly who he is and what he will do. Celebration is not the first order of the day. Instead, we learn that it is not enough to speak aloud the fact that Jesus is the Messiah.

Speaking those words will require that our expectations and hopes be transformed. We learn that it is not enough to dream of a world transformed under the narrow set of parameters out of which we all tend to operate. Dreaming of this world will require that our imaginations expand beyond the system of power and influence within which we now function.

"From that time on," Jesus starts to explain that the Messiah would not be embraced but rejected, not crowned but executed, not empowered by might but weakened by affliction.

What a disappointment this must have been, what a baffling shift in expectations. Clearly, this is not what Peter had imagined when he dared to speak the truth about Jesus' identity. He spoke correctly though incompletely, for Peter begins to seek to correct the Messiah about the nature and scope of his mission.

Listen, Jesus, this cannot be what God intends for you. There must be a different way. This is not what our deliverer ought to do. Suffering and dying is what we have all endured, prophet and ordinary person alike. You are supposed to be different. You are supposed to save us from all our enemies!

Jesus' reproach is anything but subtle: "Get behind me, Satan!" Peter moves from the heights of recognition to the depths of rejection. What can this mean? Why is Peter now acting like the great deceiver: precisely because Peter is drawing Jesus away from the divinely ordained path that moves from suffering to the cross, from torture to shame.

And this is the path upon which any of Jesus' followers must tread. The disciples are not just witnesses of Jesus' suffering but participants in it. They just don't get to tell about it. They will live through Jesus' suffering in their own bodies. What does it look like to follow the Messiah, the anointed of God? That path is lined with crosses and paved with Jesus' passion. This is a matter of life and death for his followers as much as it is for Jesus.

And yet we learn that this suffering is not all that there will be. The Son of Man will return and bring justice in his wake. Such justice is not merely the paying off old debts or the settling of bitter scores. Instead, this judgment is a promise of deliverance.

The cross will appear to span finality. The cross will appear to be the end of the story for us all. But the promise Jesus makes here and the promises God has made from the beginning assure a future, a future in which justice blooms, a future in which the hungry are fed and the imprisoned are comforted, (Matthew 25:31-46). And that future is not a long way off (Matthew 16:28).

The late Maya Angelou wrote: "I am grateful to have been loved and to be able to love, because that liberates. Love liberates. It doesn't just hold -- that's ego. Love liberates. It doesn't bind."

What an amazing thing this love is! We know what this unbinding love feels like! What hope we have because of it. We need to share this love and hope that Jesus commends.

And in sharing it imagine how "the Son of Man coming in his kingdom" occurs in great and small ways in our lives already and how that promise, assured by God's Messiah, drives us into a hopeful future even when our present troubles are engulfing us. After all, Jesus walked this path before us. Jesus knew too well rejection and loathing. He has gone before us. Now, we will follow him in faith.

This narrative draws us to wonder whether we are willing to align our beliefs and the path upon which we walk and live. It's a reminder that *speaking* the words "Jesus is the Messiah" requires only the exertion of the mind but *living* those words is a gift of God. Embodying hope in the Messiah is an act of God's love.

## Respond/Reflect

Take some time to reflect and respond. Think about God's unbinding love and your hope. How do you share this with others?

### A time of Prayer

Let's pray

Heavenly Father, thank you that we have hope because of your love shown through the sacrifice of your son. May we be people of hope and the sharing of that love in our everyday walk.

We pray for the schools and educational institutes and staff who have returned to work. Protect and guide them as they navigate the start of a new school year and how different that looks and feels for them.

We pray for the students of all ages who have returned to education after the summer break. Again, protect them as they navigate a different way to learn in those places.

We pray for those businesses still struggling with financial difficulties. Concerned about premises rent/rates and paying the employees as well as keeping the customers and employees safe. Give them wisdom and peace in the difficult decisions they must make.

We pray for those struggling to find employment with so many businesses not reopening or having to close. The daily stress of the situation can be overwhelming, help and guide them to find new opportunities and to make wise financial decisions.

Father, help us to seek out those who need help and support. If we can't help in practical ways, may we be an emotional support for those who need it.

We ask all these things in your name and for your glory/ Amen.

### The Lord's Prayer

Our Father...

### Hymn: My Hope is built on

*Sing/read/proclaim the words of this wonderful hymn*

My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame  
But wholly lean on Jesus' name

On Christ the solid Rock I stand  
All other ground is sinking sand  
All other ground is sinking sand

When darkness hides His lovely face  
I rest on His unchanging grace  
In every high and stormy gale  
My anchor holds within the veil

On Christ the solid Rock I stand  
All other ground is sinking sand  
All other ground is sinking sand

His oath, His covenant, His blood  
Support me in the whelming flood  
When all around my soul gives way  
He then is all my hope and stay

On Christ the solid Rock I stand  
All other ground is sinking sand  
All other ground is sinking sand

On Christ the solid Rock I stand  
All other ground is sinking sand  
All other ground is sinking sand

When He shall come with trumpet sound  
Oh, may I then in Him be found  
Dressed in His righteousness alone  
Faultless to stand before the throne

On Christ the solid Rock I stand  
All other ground is sinking sand  
All other ground is sinking sand

On Christ the solid Rock I stand  
All other ground is sinking sand  
All other ground is sinking sand

*Bob Kauflin*

### A prayer of Blessing

Lord, help me to always remember you are our hope.  
Guide us in how to share this hope and your love with others. **Amen.**

**New International Version - UK (NIVUK)**

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