



The Methodist Church In Ireland

Sunday 5th July, 'Lifting the Burden'

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

Loving heavenly father, we thank you for this opportunity to come together, although separately in our homes to worship you. Even though we are further apart geographically than what we are accustomed too, we are together in love and fellowship with you and with each other. We thank you that during this time, we can put aside our worries and concerns and focus on you.

May we always remember your power and love and that we can leave our burdens with you. You have told us not to be afraid, as your children may we always have faith and hope, and may we find opportunities to share this with others.

May your love for others be shown in and through us, that others may too know you.

Hymn: Give thanks to the Lord

Sing/read/proclaim the words of this wonderful song

1 Give thanks to the Lord, our God and King
His love endures forever
For He is good, He is above all things
His love endures forever

Sing praise, sing praise

2 With a mighty hand and outstretched arm
His love endures forever
For the life that's been reborn
His love endures forever

Sing praise, sing praise
Sing praise, sing praise

*Forever, God is faithful
Forever, God is strong
Forever, God is with us
Forever*

*Forever, God is faithful
Forever, God is strong
Forever, God is with us
Forever*

3 From the rising to the setting sun
His love endures forever
And by the grace of God, we will carry on
His love endures forever

Sing praise, sing praise
Sing praise, sing praise.

Forever God is faithful...

Chris Tomlin (b 1972)

Genesis 24: 34-38, 42-49, 58-67

³⁴ So he said, "I am Abraham's servant. ³⁵ The LORD has blessed my master abundantly, and he has become wealthy. He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys. ³⁶ My master's wife Sarah has borne him a son in her old age, and he has given him everything he owns. ³⁷ And my master made me swear an oath, and said, 'You must not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live, ³⁸ but go to my father's family and to my own clan, and get a wife for my son.'

⁴² "When I came to the spring today, I said, 'LORD, God of my master Abraham, if you will, please grant success to the journey on which I have come.'

⁴³ See, I am standing beside this spring. If a young woman comes out to draw water and I say to her, "Please let me drink a little water from your jar," ⁴⁴ and if she says to me, "Drink, and I'll draw water for your camels too," let her be the one the LORD has chosen for my master's son.'

⁴⁵ "Before I finished praying in my heart, Rebekah came out, with her jar on her shoulder. She went down to the spring and drew water, and I said to her, 'Please give me a drink.'

⁴⁶ "She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder and said, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too.' So I drank, and she watered the camels also.

⁴⁷ "I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?'

"She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milkah bore to him.'

"Then I put the ring in her nose and the bracelets on her arms, ⁴⁸ and I bowed down and worshiped the LORD. I praised the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me on the right road to get the granddaughter of my master's brother for his son. ⁴⁹ Now if you will show kindness and faithfulness to my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so I may know which way to turn."

⁵⁸ So they called Rebekah and asked her, "Will you go with this man?"

"I will go," she said.

⁵⁹ So they sent their sister Rebekah on her way, along with her nurse and Abraham's servant and his men. ⁶⁰ And they blessed Rebekah and said to her,

"Our sister, may you increase
to thousands upon thousands;
may your offspring possess
the cities of their enemies."

⁶¹ Then Rebekah and her attendants got ready and mounted the camels and went back with the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left.

⁶² Now Isaac had come from Beer Lahai Roi, for he was living in the Negev. ⁶³ He went out to the field one evening to meditate, ^[a] and as he looked up, he saw camels approaching. ⁶⁴ Rebekah also looked up and saw Isaac. She got down from her camel ⁶⁵ and asked the servant, "Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?"

"He is my master," the servant answered. So she took her veil and covered herself.

⁶⁶ Then the servant told Isaac all he had done. ⁶⁷ Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Let us pray

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen

Romans 7: 15-25a

¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30

¹⁶ "To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:

¹⁷ "'We played the pipe for you,
and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge,
and you did not mourn.'

¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' ¹⁹ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.

The Father Revealed in the Son

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. ²⁶ Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

²⁷ "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Reflection

Over the last number of weeks, in fact months, people, families, places, organisations, businesses, churches have had to overcome a lot of changes. Even though these changes have largely meant the slow down or shut down of our movements, there has still felt a level of energy that has made us hyper. It almost feels like every day some remark or issue leaves us asking multiple questions, we feel confused and not sure what direction we are going.

But yet, these words that Jesus said over 2000 years ago are like a cooling balm, they make me want to do a belly flop onto my bed and just rest.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Our faithfulness does demand action and sometimes risk. But faithfulness is also about being present in the refreshing love of a God who adores us; a God who is present in each and every moment, even the hard ones that people are feeling right now in these times. And the great discipline of faith is to be present in each and every moment, trusting that God is present too. In fact, God was present before we were!

We have a tendency to see things in dualities: right and wrong, left and right, black and white, righteous and sinful. And sometimes these categories work, but more often there are complexities to climb into, ambiguities to acknowledge, questions that can't be answered fully. Questions about how we are separately dealing with this virus, how our leaders are dealing with it, how schools are dealing with it and how our churches are dealing with it.

We also tend to want to solve problems. And sometimes there are problems to be solved. But more often than not the problems *themselves* are complicated and in fact present many layers of problems. Think about healthcare, job loses, or systemic racism – these are complicated problems with many sides, many reactions.

Many years ago, I went to a seminar about how our world is made up of so many people, about how opposites that need to be taken into effect, that need to be balanced, to be weighed. We need dreamers and we need pragmatists, realists – we need each other.

But right in the middle of the complexities of who we are, decisions to be made, and life as it is, stands Jesus saying, "Come to me!" Let me dwell with you and you dwell with me."

Let your burden go.

The middle is where the position of presence, knowledge, strength and release will be found.

When we take the time to come to Jesus – in the middle of all the tension or the worry or the decisions, we will feel a release and catch a glimpse of a bigger picture. "Come to me." Yes, do the research, count the costs, have the conversations, do it all, but "Come to me."

And the more we come to Jesus, the more we seek his peace, his yoke, his rest, we will discover a gentleness and a humility that we didn't know we had.

Respond/Reflect

Reflect on these words, even say them aloud. Add some of your own examples that are relevant to you at this time, knowing that you can come to him at any time.

If it works, "**Come to me.**"

If it fails, "**Come to me.**"

If you become successful, **“Come to me.”**

If you never have a full-time job, **“Come to me.”**

If you are in trouble, **“Come to me.”**

If you are struggling, **“Come to me.”**

If you are going through a really good patch, **“Come to me.”**

Thank you that we can come to you at any time and find rest.

A time of Prayer

Heavenly father,

Loving God, we ask for the gift of your Holy Spirit to help us pray as we ought.

Lord, sometimes it is so hard to find the words to express how we feel. The battles at times can feel so intense and overwhelming, we feel tired, weary and worn. Help us always to remember that you will never leave us. You are our refuge and our strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

We know that the enemy wouldn't be fighting so hard against us if we weren't making a difference for your Kingdom. He wouldn't be trying so hard to stop us if he didn't think you had so much good still in store.

When we find ourselves struggling with worry, or burdened down with cares, it's hard to even know what to pray. Words seem far away, and our thoughts can all too easily get lost in what's overwhelming us. But here's what we can hold on to, even in those difficult times: God understands. He hears us, and He is close, always. He reminds us to draw near to Him and find mercy and grace in times of need.

We just have to choose to come to Him with our problems, to pray and ask Him for help.

Lord, we pray for those around who are feeling overwhelmed and burdened.

For those overwhelmed with grief, may you help them to breathe without the ache.

For those burdened with financial worries, may they search for positive solutions rather than burying their heads.

For those overwhelmed with uncertainties may they find calm and peace in their decisions and choices.

Over and over in His Word, Jesus reminds us not to worry, not to fear, not to be "troubled" in our hearts. He lovingly assures us that no matter what we face in this life, He is still greater, and He has already overcome it all. Because of Jesus, we too can live victorious and free. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father.....

Hymn: Jesus, Lord we look to thee

Sing/read/proclaim the words of this wonderful hymn

1 Jesus, be the centre
Be my source, be my light
Jesus

2 Jesus, be the centre
Be my hope, be my song
Jesus

*Be the fire in my heart
Be the wind in these sails
Be the reason that I live
Jesus, Jesus*

3 Jesus, be my vision
Be my path, be my guide
Jesus

Be the fire.....

Michael Frye

A prayer of Blessing

Whatever burdens you are feeling, seek the love and guidance of our gracious Heavenly Father and He will give you rest. **Amen.**

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