

Dorset South and West Methodist Circuit Written Service
8th November 2020 – prepared by Student Deacon Janet Amey

CALL TO WORSHIP

Gracious God, guide of all who put their trust in you: grant us in all our doubts and uncertainties the grace to seek your will. That your Holy Spirit may save us from all false choices and that in your light we may see light; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen (William Bright 1824 - 1901)

Hymn: Be still

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

PRAYERS

Glorious God,
your holy Presence is here, your glory shines all around.
We gather in your name to worship and celebrate your presence in our lives.
In the morning sun – we feel your light on the world.
In the wind – we are guided by your Spirit. With holy fire, with splendour you are crowned.
We join with all creation in worship of you in faith.
In our lives we live in your presence, of love, of wisdom, of life.
Your power moves in all places, in our lives.
And in our hearts, we turn to you,
Glorious God – we adore you.
Amen

We bring our prayers of confession before God.
I invite you to take a moment to bring to mind the times, words and moments that burden your heart.

Faithful God,
We are called to be a people of love.
We bring before you the times when we have not acted in love.
The times that we have not cared for one another.
The words we have spoken that have caused harm.
The actions that we have chosen that have caused pain.
Refresh us, and renew us in you cleansing love, and forgive us.
In God we are assured of forgiveness and love.
Thanks be to God,
Amen

READING

Matthew 25:1-13 NRSV

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise replied, ‘No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’ Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

REFLECTION

To get to this meaning we need to understand a bit about marriage customs of the time. Marriages were arranged between 2 families. People didn’t get engaged to one another but were betrothed, as the families agreed 2 people should marry at a later date perhaps a year or more away. During the betrothal period the families would discuss the terms of the relationship. After this time the bride was then transferred to the groom’s father’s house where a marriage feast was celebrated, lasting a week. This is the feast that the ‘foolish bridesmaids’ couldn’t get into. The groom’s delay would have been due to the negotiations between the families - talking about money, dowry, and agreements of things like what happens if the husband dies or they get divorced.

What was the significance for the early church?

God was identified as the bridegroom of the people Israel, and in the early church Jesus is referred to as the bridegroom. The message is - who is welcome in the Father’s house? The answer is those that have faith in the Son. Jesus is symbolised as the groom that returns and brings the rule of God. The ‘wise bridesmaids’ are those that continue to have faith, a faith that continues to burn in the darkness. The foolish are those that choose not to have faith and wait in darkness.

What is the significance for us?

I feel there is no quick answer to this, as the many different elements to this reading spark different questions and reflections to us.

What seems like a fun story of marriage, lights and celebrations is actually an apocalyptic message that would have been apparent to the listeners of the time. With a bit of explanation, the message is just as relevant to us. Knowing that Christ will return, knowing the love of God surrounds all and everything and knowing that we need to keep faith in the darkness of the night.

For many, much darkness has come with the pandemic, as fear and illness become very real. Many have found loneliness and separation from friends very difficult. This reading tells us to take an extra stash of faith in our pockets to keep our lights burning. I wonder what that extra stash might look like for you. A prayer, a friend, a scripture, a place, a comfort, a support...? Whatever it is, treasure it and keep your faith burning. The foolish in the parable needed to go to the shop to buy wicks for their lights, I wonder what this replenishing of faith might look like in your life?

A final thought, I wonder how we can shine light for those that have lost theirs, for those whose lights flicker and for those whose lights burn feint in the darkness at this time? Amen

Hymn: Will your anchor hold in the storms of life?

1. Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
when the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift and the cables strain,
will your anchor drift or firm remain?

Refrain:

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
fastened to the rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!*

2. Will your anchor hold in the straits of fear,
when the breakers roar and the reef is near?
While the surges rave and the wild winds blow,
shall the angry waves then your bark o'er flow?
(Refrain)

3. Will your eyes behold through the morning light
the city of gold and the harbour bright?
Will you anchor safe by the heavenly shore,
when life's storms are past forever more?
(Refrain)

Prayers for the world

Below are some sentences, you are invited to pause after each one and add your own thoughts and prayers, before continuing.

We pray for the situations and places that are on our hearts.

For the lost,

For the hurt,

For the bereaved,

For the sick,

For the hungry,

For the broken,

May God's love surround those that we pray for and bring comfort and peace.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,

Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;

thy kingdom come; thy will be done;

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,

for ever and ever.

Amen.

Hymn: Be thou my vision

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that thou art -
Thou my best thought, by day or by night;
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord.
Thou my great Father; thine own may I be,
Thou in me dwelling and I one with thee.

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise;
Thou mine inheritance, now and always;
Thou and thou only first in my heart,
High King of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, my victory won,
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

BLESSING

May we live with faith, love and peace in our hearts, as we go in God's presence.
May the blessing of God the Father,
Son and Holy Spirit be with us
today and always.
Amen

