

Cheshire South Methodist Circuit 
Service at home sheet Sunday 4th May 2025

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, we gather in your presence once again. Lord, be with us and bless us so that this time of worship may enlighten us and bring you glory. **Amen**

StF no. 309 *See what a morning gloriously bright*

1 See what a morning gloriously bright,
with the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;
folded the grave clothes, tomb filled with light,
as the angels announce Christ is risen!
see God's salvation plan,
wrought in love, born in pain, paid in sacrifice,
fulfilled in Christ the Man,
for he lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

2 See Mary weeping, "Where is he laid?"
as in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb;
hears a voice speaking, calling her name;
it's the Master, the Lord raised to life again!
The voice that spans the years,
speaking life, stirring hope, bringing peace to us,
will sound till he appears,
for he lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

3 One with the Father, Ancient of Days,
through the Spirit who clothes faith with certainty;
honour and blessing, glory and praise
to the King crowned with power and authority!
And we are raised with him,
death is dead, love has won, Christ has conquered;
and we shall reign with him,
for he lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

CCL 821965 Stuart Townend and Keith Getty

Let us pray together

God of all, we come to proclaim your greatness, to sing of your might and to declare your majesty. We lift up our hearts and voices to praise you for all you have accomplished in Christ. We come to praise you for your faithfulness, and your amazing grace and forgiveness. We come to acknowledge Jesus as our Saviour and Master – the Way, Truth and the Life. We praise you for the constant presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. As we worship you today, draw us closer to you and to Christ.

Merciful God, we are ashamed of our weaknesses and faults, selfishness, pride and envy, the feeble discipleship and the shallowness of our faith. Help us to live as your people, worthy of our calling and able to bring you honour. We ask your forgiveness for the times when we have hurt or denied you by hurting or denying one of your children. We pray that whether you come to us in a loud, clear voice, or as a tiny whisper, we will hear and gladly obey. Bless us with your forgiveness and love.
Amen.

You alone, mighty Lord, have the power to forgive, and to help us see the error of our ways. Thank you for the new perspective we have when we realise we are truly forgiven.

Gospel Reading: John 21: 1 - 19

Jesus and the Miraculous Catch of Fish

²¹ Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee.^[a] It happened this way: ² Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³ "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴ Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

⁵ He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. ⁶ He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

⁷ Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. ⁸ The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. ⁹ When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." ¹¹ So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Jesus Reinstates Peter

¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

¹⁶ Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

¹⁷ The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

Message

You have probably read or heard the stories in our gospel reading many times, but today I want us to think about what where we would be if the stories hadn't happened.

Jesus was born, lived, and went to his death for us, so that we could know His Father and ours, and be forgiven for our sins. And, as we know, Jesus rose from death, and showed himself to his disciples in the upper room twice, over the following days. The disciples (including Thomas) were thus convinced that their Lord was indeed alive. But what did they do next? Did they understand what Jesus had done when he breathed on them, and told them 'receive the Holy Spirit?' We know that it was a foretaste of what would happen at Pentecost, but as far as we can tell from Scripture, the disciples didn't understand, and in their uncertainty decided to go back to doing what they knew best – fishing! Not for 'men', as Jesus had told them he would teach them to do, but for whatever they could catch in Lake Tiberius.

So they fished, all night, and caught nothing. As the sun came up, tired and dispirited, they started to make their way back to the shore, when they saw a figure who called to them, and told them to cast their nets again. And of course they caught a huge amount of fish! John recognised Jesus straight away, and they all made their way back to the beach, towing the heavy net. Peter, impetuous as

always, had already jumped in and swum/waded to where Jesus was making breakfast. So much the story tells us, followed by Jesus talking privately to Peter after the meal. But have we ever thought how significant in the story of our faith is this occasion?

The disciples had never fully grasped how Jesus' life story was going to play out (would we, in their place?) and so when Jesus wasn't visibly with them all the time, as he had been, guiding and teaching them, they became disoriented, and reverted to what they knew best. Also, of course, Peter was carrying the heavy burden of his memory of denying his Lord three times, on the eve of Jesus' death. And although Jesus had shown himself to them all, Peter did not know how to put things right, if that were possible.

But Jesus knew, of course, and also recognised that Peter needed to be helped to become the leader that would be needed in a very few days' time. So the meal together, and then the gentle but rigorous questions: 'Do you love me?' Peter, probably later, realised the full impact of what Jesus had done in putting their relationship right so that he could move forward. Before Jesus finally ascended to His Father, he continued to teach the disciples many things that they needed to know, and prepare them to take his work, and His Father's will, forward. And so it was that when the feast of Pentecost arrived, and with it the Holy Spirit like tongues of fire, Peter understood, was greatly empowered, and stood up and spoke God's message strongly and with courage. His leadership and witness played a major part in the spread of the gospel, across the known world, and on to today.

Peter failed Jesus, in denying he had ever known him. We fail Jesus, whenever we don't feel strong enough to stand out and talk about him to others. And if we are true followers of our Lord, we feel guilty, and need to reconcile ourselves to Jesus. He is ready and willing to help us, to assure us that we are forgiven, and to encourage us to try again, in the strength that the Holy Spirit will give us. If Jesus hadn't reached out to Peter after breakfast on the beach that morning, and if Peter hadn't accepted Jesus' gentle offer of forgiveness, and re-commissioning, then maybe our faith, and our Christian story, might have been very different. Like Peter, though, we are in the hands of a wise and loving Saviour, who in his turn knows God's will for all his children. Let us trust completely, even from the darkest of our days, that the Holy Spirit can bring life, and light and hope not just for ourselves, but for those we meet, and to whom we are sent.

Prayers of intercession

In this week of local elections, we pray for those standing as candidates and for those who will vote. May truth and integrity lead the way for all, and the way of Christ be followed as decisions are made about the administration of justice and implementation of policies that affect the lives of millions.

We pray for those whose abuse of power leads to the oppression and even deaths of those who speak out. May truth and integrity lead the way for all, and the way of Christ be followed.

We continue to pray for the people of Ukraine. For those hiding in basements, for those living in trenches, for those traumatised by all they have seen, heard and endured. May they encounter your risen presence in the ruins of their lives and in the rubble of their cities.

We pray for people who feel forgotten as the attention of the world's media moves elsewhere: in Gaza, Afghanistan, Syria, The Yemen, and all places of war and hunger. May they encounter your risen presence in the ruins of their lives and in the rubble of their cities.

And we pray for fishermen today, those whose nets are emptied by regulations, or climate change, and all who face danger at sea. We pray for our stewardship of the rivers and oceans of the world, that they may be protected from all pollution; and we pray for all creatures in the oceans and seas. Lord Jesus may we catch on to your teaching, follow your way and love one another and all creation.

We pray for farmers and those who work the land, for all whose livelihoods are threatened; for compassion in farming practices, and for thoughtful planting. And we pray for one another, for those we worship alongside, for those on our hearts, and for those we know who are suffering. Lord Jesus may we catch on to your teaching, follow your way and love one another and all creation.

All knowing God, we thank you for our calling as your disciples. We acknowledge that your love is beyond our understanding. So we pray for those who feel that they are unworthy of your love, for whatever reason. May they realise that no-one is turned away when they call on Jesus' name. May they be touched afresh as Peter was touched and restored by Jesus.

We ask all our prayers in and through the name of your Son, our risen Lord Jesus. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

StF no. 426 *Hark, my soul, it is the Lord*

1 Hark, my soul! It is the Lord;
'tis thy Saviour, hear his word;
Jesus speaks, and speaks to thee:
"Say, poor sinner, lov'st thou me?"

2 I delivered thee when bound,
and, when bleeding, healed thy wound;
sought thee wandering, set thee right,
turned thy darkness into light.

3 Can a woman's tender care
cease towards the child she bare?
Yes, she may forgetful be,
yet will I remember thee.

4 Mine is an unchanging love,
higher than the heights above,
deeper than the depths beneath,
free and faithful, strong as death.

5 Thou shalt see my glory soon,
when the work of grace is done;
partner of my throne shalt be;
Say, poor sinner, lov'st thou me?"

6 Lord, it is my chief complaint
that my love is weak and faint;
yet I love thee, and adore;
O for grace to love thee more!

William Cowper

A prayer of blessing

We go from this place with our thoughts and understandings changed. May we have eyes to see you at work in our lives and community. May we have words of love to offer to people society often shuns. May we trust and obey your call on our lives. Gracious God, take our faith, flawed though it is, our love, poor though it may be, and our commitment, for all its imperfections, and use us in your service we pray, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

And God be with us, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in every moment of our lives.

This worship service has been prepared by Sue Taylor