

Cheshire South Methodist Circuit 
Service at home sheet Sunday 7th July 2024

Call to worship

Faithful God, The strength of all who believe and the hope of those who doubt; may we, who have not seen, have faith and receive the fullness of Christ's blessing; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. **Amen.**

StF no. 161 *Speak, O Lord, as we come to you*

1 Speak, O Lord, as we come to you
To receive the food of your holy word.
Take your truth, plant it deep in us;
Shape and fashion us in your likeness,
That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us
All your purposes, for your glory.

2 Teach us, Lord, full obedience,
Holy reverence, true humility.
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
In the radiance of your purity.
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
Your majestic love and authority.
Words of power that can never fail;
Let their truth prevail over unbelief.

3 Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
Help us grasp the heights of your plans for us.
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
That will echo down to through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on your promises,
And by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, till your church is built
And the earth is filled with your glory.

CCL 821965 Keith Getty and Stuart Townend

Let us pray

Source of Life, Risen Lord, Breath of Hope, we lift our hearts and minds in praise to you and rejoice that you are stronger than death, truer than lies, loving and faithful to the end. You are there at our beginnings, and you walk with us through our endings, and nothing can separate us from your love. Be near as we open heart and mind to you in worship, thankful for your grace and stunned by your great mercy. For with you we can reveal our everyday reality as it is; no holds barred. You only wait for our honesty so that you may reach out with healing kindness to restore us where we need it most. May we wait on you with trust, seeking what is good, and may we find you, and follow you, as we worship you. **Amen.**

But, loving and gracious God, we are very aware that in our following, we also fail and fall. We hurt those we love by our words or neglect. We do not love our neighbours as we know we should. And we put ourselves first, and only think of others when we hear your word of rebuke. Forgive us now, Lord, and draw us ever closer to you, so that we can hear your voice guiding us and leading us forward.

Thank you that through your love and mercy, we can know our sins are forgiven. **Amen**

Readings Mark 6: 1 – 13 *A Prophet Without Honour*

6 Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ² 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? ³ Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph,^[a] Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. ⁴ Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honour except in his own town, among his relatives and

in his own home.”⁵ He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them.⁶ He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve

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

⁸These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts.⁹ Wear sandals but not an extra shirt.¹⁰ Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town.¹¹ 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.”

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

2 Corinthians 12: 2 - 10

²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows.³ And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—⁴was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell.⁵ I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses.⁶ Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say,⁷ or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.¹⁰ That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Talk

I expect you remember times past when interesting and exciting things were planned to happen. Suddenly, a few days beforehand, brightly-coloured posters would appear all over the town, advertising the Carnival, the circus, the fair at Tipkinder Park, the Pantomime, and so on. You may not have been interested in going to what was being advertised, but you knew that something was happening that was different from the normal, everyday things.

In our gospel reading today, we hear of Jesus being rejected by the people in the town where He grew up. “He’s just the local carpenter. We know His mother and the rest of the family. Where is He getting His ideas from? How does He do these healings, and teachings? They can’t really be special, or from God.” I think that today, “celebrities” must have the same problems in their home town, although of course if they become famous enough, and for the right reasons, in due time the town will become proud of them, and claim them as their own, and maybe even erect a blue plaque! No such recognition, sadly for Jesus, who acknowledged that this is the way of things.

He moves on, with His disciples, and begins to prepare them for a new experience. The word “disciple” means “follower” and “learner”, and now it was time for them to get some practical experience, rather than just looking and learning from Jesus. If you have ever embarked on something new – a night class, a new hobby or activity, even just a different kind of holiday which offers new experiences, almost your first question is likely to be “What do I need to take/bring with me/supply?” There is a feeling of venturing into the unknown, and while it may well be exciting, you feel that you want to be “prepared for all that might happen”. You may even try to read up about it first, to get some kind of idea of “what you have let yourself in for”!

Feel, then, for the disciples. They have been accompanying Jesus, and listening to Him, and discussing things with Him, but now, suddenly, He is telling them that they are to go out on their own, with a partner, and do the things that He has been doing, in the places that He plans to visit. They are to be, if

you like, living posters in advance of Jesus' own arrival. That would be challenging enough, but Jesus also tells them that they are to take nothing with them, and rely on the people in the towns they will visit. Of course the situation in the time of Jesus was very different to ours today (imagine yourself knocking on a door and telling the homeowner "God has told me to come and stay at your house while I preach and work in the town.") In the time of Jesus, travelling preachers and healers of many different kinds were regular visitors to towns, some of them more welcome than others. But the disciples are told not only to go out and preach the good news to the towns they will visit, but to accept whatever accommodation they are offered, and eat whatever they are given.

They must have had some qualms about what Jesus wanted them to do, and even doubted their own abilities (cast out demons, and heal the sick), but nevertheless they went. We aren't told whether any towns rejected them, but Jesus had provided a strategy for that, too – "wipe the dust of your feet off against them, and tell them why you are doing that". Can you imagine the feelings of the disciples the first time they anointed a sick person, and spoke words of healing over them, and the person recovered? Or the first time an evil spirit left screaming, when they spoke words of deliverance over the afflicted person?

In our reading from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, Paul describes how "a man in Christ" (himself, we can be in no doubt) was taken up in a vision to paradise, and saw wonderful things that are not to be spoken about here on earth. It would have been so easy for him, even without telling what he had seen, to boast about the fact that God had shown him the vision, perhaps as a reward for what he was doing in bringing people into the Kingdom through his missionary journeys. But, says Paul, "I will not/cannot boast, because I am weak, and do not do those things which I should. Furthermore," says Paul, "God has given me a serious weakness in the form of a thorn in my flesh, a thorn from Satan, and although I have prayed that the Lord will take it away, the Lord's answer was *My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*

We thought, earlier in this message, about how we like to prepare for a new experience, or travel, or learning, so that we don't go into it "cold", and find ourselves at a disadvantage. But sometimes, we don't have time to prepare, as when a situation crops up, and we just have to react to it. Suppose, for example, that someone falls in the street just in front of you. I imagine you would pause with shock, for a moment, and then go over to them and see if they were hurt, or in need of help. Perhaps you would use your phone to call an ambulance, or gather up their shopping from where it had scattered across the pavement. You might, I suppose, walk by on the other side, but let's assume you would want to be of help.

We need also to be ready, in the sense of listening and being alert, to words that God might give us about something He wants us to do. It might be an everyday thing, like helping someone in the street, or it might be a bigger task, that is going to take up some of our time and a fair bit of our energy. We can never know when we are going to be called by the Lord to work for Him, and it will almost always be a challenge to us, and possibly something we have never done before, and for which we don't feel we have the necessary skills. And we can always think of excuses why the Lord shouldn't ask us to help – we're too old, too busy already, it clashes with something else we had planned to do we, won't be able to manage it and we will make a mess of it. If we share these anxieties with Him (if we dare), He will respond as He did to the apostle Paul: *My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*

And so we go with Him, and try to do what He is asking, and in His strength and with His power and love, we succeed more than we could ever have imagined. His will is done, our faith has grown stronger, and, like the disciples, we feel able to follow Him more closely, and dare more in His love and faith in us. When we have nothing of our own to offer, and feel useless and frail, His Spirit will fill us, and dance in us with gentle grace, shining through the fear and dullness we embrace, and making the colours that He has placed in us sing out for all to see. **Amen**

Prayers of Intercession

God of all, we pray for your world.

We pray for people of differing faiths, and for those who insist there is no God, and for those who are uncertain, that we may all trust in what we know, believe that truth is strong enough to prevail over what is doubtful, and prove tolerant especially towards any need for healing and hope. Help us to make space for your redeeming grace.

We pray for the leaders of the nations, that they may be wise in exercising justice, and compassionate in showing mercy.

We pray for those who harm, that we might find ways to forgive and thereby gain clarity of mind to help effect changes which limit or remove that harm.

We pray for those whose hurt is so great that forgiveness may not be an appropriate response at this point in time; that we might be forgiven for any pressure they feel from the way we express the Good News of God's love, and that we might instead offer a hope which is both trustworthy and just.

We pray for those who are struggling in body, mind, or soul. May they receive loving kindness in thought and word and deed.

We pray for any who are grieving. And we thank you that we can trust that Jesus has conquered death and sin, and reigns over time and space with you and the Holy Spirit; one loving God. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

StF no. 660 *Called by Christ to be disciples*

1 Called by Christ to be disciples
every day in every place,
we are not to hide as hermits
but to spread the way of grace;
citizens of heaven's kingdom,
though the world is where we live,
as we serve a faithful Master,
faithful service may we give.

2 Rich and varied are our pathways,
many callings we pursue:
may we use our gifts and talents
always, Lord, to honour You;
so in government or commerce,
college, hospice, farm or home,
whether volunteers or earning,
may we see Your kingdom come.

Hard decisions may confront us,
urging us to compromise;
still obedience is our watchword –
make us strong and make us wise!
Secular is turned to sacred,
made a precious offering,
as our daily lives are fashioned
in submission to our King.

CCL821965 Martin Leckebush

Closing Prayer

May God, who raised Jesus Christ from death to life, raise us from fear to hope, from despair to joy, from confusion to action, and may his peace fill our hearts and flow out to all whose lives touch ours this day and every day. And may you know God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with you in every day of your life. **Amen.**

Service prepared by Mrs. Sue Taylor