

G0gCheshire South Methodist Circuit 
Service at home sheet Sunday 11th May 2025

Call to Worship

We join together today to worship the risen Christ: who brings peace into our fear; who brings hope into our despair; who brings love into our world; Alleluia! Christ is risen! **Amen.**

A prayer of praise and adoration

Heavenly Father and Creator of all, you have given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. You have brought us into an inheritance that is imperishable, un-defiled, and unfading. To you be praise, through Christ our risen Lord, Who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. **Amen**

A prayer of thanksgiving

Thank you, gracious Christ, For the peace which steps gently into the midst of our fear, even when we bar the door against you; for the peace which speaks to our need from the costly depth of your own loving; for the peace which sends us out in your name, as wounded healers, forgiven sinners, children reborn, outcasts raised from the dead. We thank you. **Amen.**

A prayer of Confession

Loving God, we confess that at times we do not share in the joy of the resurrection but are caught in the worries of the world. We confess that we do not always live in the spirit of new life but remain discontented, grumbling and anxious. Forgive us for not sharing in the Good News. Forgive us when we find it more comfortable to worry and complain than to risk the joy and encouragement of new life in Christ. We have so many things to concern us both close to home and across the world. Let us confess to our Lord the error of our focus.

Call us back to your ways, O God, to seek hope and reconciliation, restoration and peace. In the name of the Risen Christ, we pray. **Amen.**

Assurance of Forgiveness

Christ is risen! The stone is rolled away, the tomb found empty. Mary calls out, "I have seen the Lord!" We have seen Christ, too, in every helping hand, in every heartfelt gift, in every choice to restore life in this world. We are called to this new life, a life of forgiveness and reconciliation. We should each hold this in our hearts and remember - you are forgiven; accept your forgiveness and know that God loves you and desires great joy for your life. Let us each and all walk forward on this journey of faith, knowing that as brothers and sisters we walk together. **Amen.**

Singing the Faith no. 286 *What kind of love is this*

1 What kind of love is this
that gave itself for me?
I am the guilty one, yet I go free.
What kind of love is this,
a love I've never known;
I didn't even know his name,
what kind of love is this?

2 What kind of man is this,
that died in agony?
He who had done no wrong was crucified for me.
What kind of man is this,
who laid aside his throne
that I may know the love of God –
what kind of man is this?

3 By grace I have been saved;
it is the gift of God.
He destined me to be His own such is His love.
No eye has ever seen,
no ear has ever heard,
nor has the human heart conceived
what kind of love is this?

CCL821965 Bryn Howarth and Sally Howarth

Reading: *John 10:22-30*

²² Then came the Festival of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³ and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon's Colonnade. ²⁴ The Jews who were there gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly."
²⁵ Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

Reading: *Acts 9:36-43*

³⁶ In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. ³⁷ About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. ³⁸ Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!"
³⁹ Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them. ⁴⁰ Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. ⁴² This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. ⁴³ Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.

Message

In our passage from John's gospel, Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Festival of Dedication. This festival was a commemoration of the cleansing of the temple in 164 BC after it had been defiled in 167 BC when Antiochus Epiphanes had sacrificed a pig on the altar of burnt offering. The Jewish faith still celebrate this festival; it is near the end of December and is the present day Festival of Lights - or

Hanukkah. There would have been a big crowd in and around the temple for the festival when Jesus was there. Some of the crowd gathered around Jesus and spoke to him. They wanted proof that Jesus was the Messiah. There is nothing actually wrong with asking for proof - sometimes it is wise to do so. Thomas asked for proof when he had been told by the other disciples that they had seen the risen Lord. And Jesus had spoken kindly to Thomas - not reprimanding him at all for doubting. But the Jews who had surrounded Jesus at the temple during the Festival of Dedication, were asking for proof for the wrong reasons. They weren't looking for proof to help them believe so that they could follow Jesus. Instead, their motive was to get Jesus to declare himself as the Messiah for pretty much the opposite reason. Whilst those questioning Jesus would have been very happy for him to have come as Messiah to drive out the Romans - they did not believe this was going to happen, or that it was possible. They did not believe he could do this. These Jewish doubters asking for proof were hoping that Jesus would identify himself as the Messiah, so that they could accuse him of lying. Jesus' reply did confirm his identity. He said that his works spoke for him; the works which Jesus did in the name of the Father were a testimony to his identity. Jesus spoke of being the Shepherd whose sheep would listen to his voice. The Shepherd protects the sheep and keeps them from harm. This is the clearest statement Jesus made about his divinity. He said "I and the Father are one." Jesus was not merely a teacher, but is God. His claim was unmistakable. The religious leaders wanted to kill him because their laws said that anyone claiming to be God should die. They were not seeking proof with an open mind. Despite their request, nothing would have persuaded them that Jesus' claim was true.

The passage from the Acts of the Apostles is also about evidencing the power of God. The disciples had become the apostles after the ascension of Christ. Apostle means "one who is sent off" from the Greek word "stellein". The literal English meaning is emissary - those sent out to spread the message. Peter was in Lydda near Joppa. There was a disciple named Tabitha in Joppa. She had made an enormous impact in her community by always doing good works and helping the poor. She made robes and other clothing for the community and was renowned for her kindness to all. When she became ill and died, there was immense sadness. Her body was cleaned and many, many mourners came to show their love for her. Many were likely to have been recipients of her kindness and help. Peter was called from nearby Lydda, and when he arrived he was shown some of the work she had done for others. Tabitha had been a follower of Christ and had shown this by her care for others. This was proof that God was at work in her life. God uses great teachers to spread the gospel, but the varied work of all followers is also testament to the work of the Kingdom of God in communities. The gift of kindness like that which Tabitha showed and shared is as valuable as the works of teachers and apostles. We all have gifts; we may think our gifts are small and insignificant, but in the Kingdom of God every gift is valuable and should be used to help others. Using our gifts is ongoing proof that Jesus is who he said he is. The highlight of this story can easily be seen as Peter's prayer which brought Tabitha back to life, but it was the enormous love which Tabitha shared which made the miracle so special. Tabitha's life was restored - and her work for those around her could continue. This was proof of the power of God - Peter's prayer for Tabitha - and in turn the people she helped, was so very different from the reason that the Jews had asked Jesus for proof that he was the Messiah. Peter knew that Tabitha's work was of great value to the people, and that the restoration of her to life would help people both practically and in coming to faith. There is nothing wrong with asking for proof - it depends on why it is requested. **Amen.**

A prayer for guidance in the use of our gifts

Lord, we praise you for your steadfast love and that your mercies are new every morning. Thank you that you hear each voice as we cry out to you for strength and wisdom. Be with us today and always, and help us to feel your presence and walk out your will. Help us to glorify you in all that we do and say, as we use the gifts you have given us. **Amen.**

Hymns & Psalms no. 69 *The King of love my Shepherd is*

1 The King of love my Shepherd is,
whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his
and He is mine forever.

2 Where streams of living water flow
my ransomed soul He leadeth,
and where the verdant pastures grow
with food celestial feedeth

3 Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
but yet in love sought me,
and on his shoulder gently laid,
and home rejoicing brought me.

4 In death's dark vale I fear no ill
with Thee, dear Lord, beside me;
thy rod and staff my comfort still,
Thy cross before to guide me.

5 Thou spread'st a table in my sight;
Thy unction, grace bestoweth;
and O what transport of delight
from thy pure chalice floweth!

6 And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never.
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
within Thy house for ever.

Henry Williams Baker

A prayer of intercession

Holy God, you have called us to follow in the way of your risen Son, and to care for those who are our companions, not only with words of comfort, but with acts of love. Seeking to be true friends of all, we offer our prayers on behalf of the church and the world.

We pray for the world: we pray for peace in war-torn places. We pray for the church across the world in its many varied forms and cultures. We pray for our own church.

We pray for our friends of other faiths, and for harmony and genuine respect and understanding of one another. We pray for the health of the nations and their peoples. We pray for our own country and for those who govern us. We pray for our local towns and villages, and for the people who make up our communities. We pray for our families and friends, particularly those we know who are in special need of your love and comfort at this time, and we give thanks for the love and closeness we share. And we pray for ourselves.

Guide us in the path of discipleship, so that, as you have blessed us, we may be a blessing for others, bringing the promise of the kingdom near by our words and deeds. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

Closing Prayer

God of comfort and compassion, through Jesus, your Son, you lead us to the water of life and table of your bounty. May we who have received the tender love of our Good Shepherd be strengthened by your grace to care for your flock. **Amen.**

This worship service was prepared by Mrs Sally Graham