

Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit

Worship at Home: Sunday 10th October 2021

This service was prepared by Graham Hepburn.

Welcome and Preparation

'Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.' (Psalm 25 v 4-5)

Listen, read, pray or sing along

Praise the Lord, his glories show, *Alleluia* (StF 84),
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WP7wMa1ycg>

1. Praise the Lord, His glories show, *Alleluia!*
Saints with His courts below,
Angels round His throne above,
All that see and share His love.

2. Earth to heaven, and heaven to earth,
Tell His wonders, sing His worth;
Age to age and shore to shore,
Praise Him, praise Him evermore!

3. Praise the Lord, His mercies trace,
Praise His providence and grace,
All that he for us has done,
All He sends us through His Son.

4. Strings and voices, hands and hearts,
In the concert play you parts;
All that breathe, you Lord adore,
Praise Him, praise Him evermore!

Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847)

Opening Prayers taken from 'The Earth is the Lords,' 2020/21 Methodist Prayer Handbook)

Prayer of Invocation

Come and sit beside me while I pray, Lord. I need to feel as though you are close enough to hear.

Lately, you've seemed distant and far away from the bustle of my life - but now I pause, and at last I realise that you have been there all the while.

Throughout all my distractions, you have been with me, patiently waiting for my focus to return to you.

You invite me to come and sit beside you, not because I am worthy, but because I am in need.

Now I'm still, and in the peace that enfolds me, I know that you are God. Amen. (*Lynne Gennoe*)

Prayer of Praise and Adoration,

Creator God, we marvel at the details of your handiwork: petals and spiders' webs and tiny grains of sand. Perfect and accurate in microscopic beauty, precision tooling by your almighty hand.

We thank you and praise you for the colours of creation: infinite variety of pigment and of shade. Genius at work in the brushstrokes of nature, fingerprint of glory in the landscape you have made.

Lord, we breathe your essence in the fragrance of the flowers: priceless perfumes gift-wrapped by you. Help us to appreciate and care for your creation so that future generations experience it anew. Amen. (*Margaret Littlecott*)

Prayer of Confession

Lord, I'm sorry for the things I have done and shouldn't have done,
for the things I have said and now wish I hadn't.
the things I thought and now regret.

The damage has been done, the time has passed and it's too late now to apologise.

Thank you that I can turn to you and say 'Sorry', knowing that you'll forgive me and I can start again in a new relationship with you. Amen

(Hilary Jefferies)

Bible Readings: Psalm 22 v 1-15 Mark 10 v 17-31

Reflection

"You lack one thing, go, sell all that you have, and give to the poor." (Mark 10 v 21)

Timeline October 2021

- 06/10/21 - the Service at Home sheet on the above text from the Lectionary lesson is distributed around the Circuit.

- 10/10/21 - all preachers in all the Circuit churches preach on the same text from the Lectionary.

- The week following 10/10/21-church members evaluate their response. The services are so effective, that all church members in all the Circuit churches, decide to '*go, sell all that they have, and give to the poor.*'

- The month following 10/10/21- Church Treasurers are alarmed as offerings plummet, and standing orders are refused for lack of funds. Treasurers speak to the Circuit Treasurer, saying their churches can no longer meet the Circuit Assessment and therefore can no longer support our Circuit churches and ministers.

So, if we're not meant to literally, '*go, sell all that we have, and give to the poor*', then what is the meaning for us of this encounter between Jesus and the 'rich young ruler'? How do you react to Jesus telling the man to give away everything he had? He is not just told to make a significant donation to charity. He is not told just to tithe a proportion of his income, or his wealth (which are two different things!). No, he is told to give it all away. Imagine how you would have felt if you had been in that crowd, no doubt hoping that Jesus didn't turn to you and ask you to do the same! A few years ago, Janet Morley wrote '*this is a passage with which comfortably off Christians have wrestled - or wriggled out of - for generations*'.

Edel McClean is employed by the Methodist Church as a learning and development officer. This week, in my IBRA Bible reading notes 'Fresh From The Word', she writes about this passage. Edel tells of a dishevelled, ragged, bearded and frequently drenched old man who was mocked by some of her classmates when she was a teenager. But one of her teachers told them to stop, saying, 'This man was once very rich. Then someone he loved died and he was broken hearted. He gave everything he had away and made himself homeless.'

If you are like me, you value what you have worked to accumulate over the years, and the security it provides: salary, pension, home, car, the stable environment which enabled the raising of a family, holidays, both the holidays which we spend a significant amount on and shorter breaks. I hope that we have all been able to prepare financially for the future. It makes sense. It is the wisdom of the society in which we live. We would feel that we were failing if we failed to do so (There is a further comment on this point below). Not only as we look to the autumn of our lives, but earlier too,

we try to ensure that we make suitable provision for our families as they grow up and go through education. Then hopefully they can afford to leave the family home, perhaps settle down with partners, and perhaps too then have families of their own.

What are the points I believe that we should take from this lesson?

- 1) The young man thought he was obeying the rules.
- 2) But he wasn't - his wealth was an obstacle to him following Jesus.
- 3) Jesus challenged him to evaluate his discipleship, which included his giving.

Firstly, the young man was obeying the rules. The encounter begins with the question to Jesus 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus responds by listing six of the Ten Commandments. The man's response is that he has obeyed all of these. So we should give credit to him for the fact that he is doing that, and still asking, 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?' Is he asking for reassurance that what he is already doing - the good life of obeying the 'negative do not' Commandments, as well as the positive of honouring his father and his mother - is enough? Or is he already aware that more is required, and he is asking Jesus to point him in the right direction?

Obeying all the rules. The phrase 'working to rule' was one which was commonly used especially in industrial relations in the 1970's in the UK. The acknowledgement that if you do only what is legally or contractually required, then productivity will be lower, and for a person to perform at the maximum level it is necessary for that person to move beyond restrictive rules. That people find fulfilment in going beyond the minimum requirements. Not only in work, but in their lives, their relationships, their discipleship.

Secondly, we will never know if the man knew that following the rules was not enough. But we do know that Jesus knew this, by his response. Jesus was able to evaluate what the man needed to do to enable him to move forward, to be able to walk the path which would enable him to inherit eternal life. In this case, it was to give away his wealth.

In the conversation about the commandments, Jesus does not explicitly say the words of the first Commandment, 'You shall have no other gods before me', but that Commandment looms large over the conversation, for the rich man, and for us too. The man was able to follow some commandments, but had failed to observe the true meaning of the first Commandment. He may have not worshipped idols, only God, in his sabbath worship at his local synagogue. He may not have worshipped idols of other gods at other times, but clearly Jesus was able to see that something was standing in the way of a right relationship between the man and God, namely the wealth of the man.

On the face of it, the 'do not' commandments are much more clear cut. It is much easier to know the boundaries when you are told 'don't do that.' But throughout his ministry, Jesus showed this wasn't the case. For example, most people would say that the commandment 'do not commit adultery' was pretty unambiguous. But Jesus expanded that to say that, 'everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent' has committed adultery (Matt 5 v 28). Jesus knew that obeying the commandments as a set of rules was no more than the beginning. The young man needed to learn that too.

Thirdly, Jesus challenged him to evaluate his discipleship, which included his giving. For this man, the challenge was to remove the obstacle which fully prevented him inheriting eternal life. Jesus challenges him firstly to give away all he has to the poor, and then secondly, Jesus says 'and come, follow me.'

Do we invest too much of our happiness in wealth - that we find happiness in what wealth can give us, rather than in what we ourselves can create from within ourselves or within our own resources? Do we spend too much time amassing wealth, at the expense of time which we could be using elsewhere, in deepening our relationships. Does our wealth make it more difficult for us to find the attitude of unselfishness, that willingness to sit light to material things, which characterises the way of Christ?

I said earlier, we would feel that we had failed if we had not accumulated financial security, which

may well be the case for the majority of us. But I know that is not the case for everyone. Has your financial situation altered during the pandemic? Has that then led you re-evaluate your financial giving to others, and to the church? Have you been challenged by stories of poverty especially within this country? The next week, from 11-17 October, is being marked by Church Action on Poverty as Challenge Poverty Week. You can read more about this at <https://challengepoverty.co.uk/>.

In my formative teenage years, and when I started paid working after completing A levels, the minister of the church I attended would make a point of preaching once a year to the congregation about financial giving. I also recall another preacher I respect preaching a sermon on giving - 'Christian giving - what's right, or what's left?'

Jesus asks the young man, he asks us, to be willing to walk away from the things to which we are most attached if they get in the way of following him. Jesus asks us to invest in a relationship with him, regardless of the cost.

This encounter between Jesus and the rich young man challenges us to evaluate the barriers that we are placing between us and God, be it our material wealth or another matter. If there is something in our lives more important to us than God, then we, like the rich man, need to remove it.

Edel McClean's final point is to remember, that even as the young man chose to sadly walk away, Jesus continued to look upon him with great love. As he continues to look since, and today, with great love on all of those who choose to walk sadly away.

Let us pray - 'Dear Lord, I want to put my entire life in your hands. I know how difficult it is to accept your invitation to serve you but I count on your help to remove the barriers I place in your way. Help me to embrace a faith that shows itself in concrete acts of solidarity and love.' Amen.

Listen, read, pray or sing along

When I survey the wondrous cross, (StF 287)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhvXOIVsRv4>

(For those of you with internet access, I suggest you listen reflectively to Kathryn Scott's beautifully reflective rendition of this hymn)

1. When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.
2. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.
3. See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?
4. His dying crimson, like a robe,
spreads o'er his body on the tree;
then I am dead to all the globe,
and all the globe is dead to me.
5. Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Isaac Watts (1764-1748)

**Prayers of Intercession.
from Church Action on Poverty**

A Collect

Generous God , once you created a Garden, teeming with life, where roots and plants and fruit from the trees were good for food: feeding birds and beasts, and men and women made in Your likeness: show us how your image is marred when we let greed, personal gain, and waste deny our sisters & brothers their share in Your abundance.

Give us the overflowing energy that filled the world with nourishment and beauty — energy to live out Your justice, so that all may take their rightful place at the table of your generosity.

Tony Phelan

Speak again

Creator God, You said, 'Let there be light where the spirit brooded'.

Speak again, and stir us to reform your earth.

You said, 'Let there be land and water gathered in its place'.

Speak again, and let justice flow like a stream.

You said, 'Let there be fruit & seed as food for all.

Speak again, and move us to share our plenty.

You said, Let there be birds of the air and fish of the sea.

Speak again, and inspire us to respect your creatures.

You said, 'Let there be sun and moon to mark our time.

Speak again, and give us hearts to change the future

You said, Let us make them in our image to partner and help one another.

Speak again, and make us more like you

You said, Let us rest and enjoy this good earth.

Speak again, that we might embrace your peace.

Amen *c Marie Pattison, Katerine House*
(www.katherinehousefcj.org)

The Lord's Prayer

Offering and Prayer of Dedication

Gracious God, accept our gifts, and with them our lives, to be used in mission and service through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Listen, read, or sing along All for Jesus (StF 341)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2M1f_34veo

All for Jesus--all for Jesus,
this our song shall ever be;
for we have no hope, nor Saviour,
if we have not hope in thee.

All for Jesus--thou wilt give us
strength to serve thee, hour by hour,
none can move us from thy presence,
while we trust thy love and power.

All for Jesus--at thine altar
thou wilt give us sweet content;
there, dear Lord, we shall receive thee
in the solemn sacrament.

All for Jesus--thou hast loved us;
all for Jesus--thou hast died;
all for Jesus--thou art with us;
all for Jesus crucified.

All for Jesus--all for Jesus--
this the Church's song must be;
till, at last, her sons are gathered
one in love and one in thee. Amen

W J Sparrow-Simpson, (1859-1952)

Blessing

**May the blessing of God,
the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer
be with you now and always Amen.**