

Winchester, Eastleigh & Romsey Circuit Service
at Home Sheet Sunday 3rd August 2025,
Be aware of the extraordinary in the ordinary

Prepared by Pat Fry and Lisa Ball

Welcome to this service at home sheet on the 18th Sunday in ordinary time.

Take a moment to be still. Focus on something good in your immediate everyday surroundings: maybe a view from the window, a favourite picture, a photograph of someone you love, or even a comfortable chair; take a moment to be thankful for something good that is part of your ordinary everyday experience.

"Sing to God with thanksgiving in your hearts."
Colossians 3: 16

Our hymn continues thanksgiving

Hymn StF102: For the beauty of the earth

<https://youtu.be/1bDoMfIYErE>

John Rutter's setting, beautiful to listen to, or to sing along use <https://youtu.be/Zy7t2Uasqe8>

For the beauty of the earth,
for the beauty of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies:
*Gracious God, to you we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.*

For the beauty of each hour
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale and tree and flower,
sun and moon and stars of night:
Gracious God,.....

For the joy of ear and eye,
for the heart and mind's delight,
for the mystic harmony
linking sense to sound and sight:
Gracious God.....

For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth and friends above,
for all gentle thoughts and mild:
Gracious God.....

For each perfect gift and sign
to our race so freely given,
graces human and divine,
flowers of earth and buds of heaven:
*Gracious God, to you we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.*

F.S.Pierpoint 1835-1917

Prayer of confession

Gracious God, you bless us on so many ordinary everyday ways. Like flowers that bloom under a dense hedge, seldom noticed but flowering anyway, your gifts are there for us.

Forgive us that we are often too preoccupied with our problems to notice.

Help us to take time to pause and say "Thank You. Amen

Reading

When Lisa and I looked at the set readings for today, we did not find inspiration, but we were drawn to look further down the page, at Colossians 3: 12-17; it's a passage full of ideas worth pondering. A verse from this passage inspired our opening worship and Lisa has written a very personal reflection based on another verse that really spoke to her.

What struck me was how this passage linked with the story we have been looking at in the last couple of midweek services at the United Church – the story of a less well-known hero of the early church, St Barnabas.

Reading Colossians 3:12-17

Starting from the mind-blowing statement: You are the people of God, he chose you for his own, the writer then goes on to give very down to earth straight forward instructions; instructions as to how to live as Christians in our ordinary everyday experience. There's nothing difficult to understand, no dramatic acts of bravery to perform, no call to be great leaders, innovators or high achievers, but a

quality of life to aim for in our ordinary lives that is very challenging indeed.

Story and Reflection

The story of Barnabas seems to be of a man who lived by these principles. He is first mentioned in a single verse tacked on the end of a well-known reading about life in the early church; “a Jew from Cyprus called Joseph sold a field, brought the proceeds to the apostles, and he became known as Barnabas which means the encourager.”

His name occurs several more times in the book of Acts he seems to have quickly become valued by the leaders of the church in Jerusalem, entrusted with responsible tasks, and he appears to have consistently lived up to his nickname, encouraging others. Here’s an example.

When in Jerusalem there was grave concern about what was happening among the Christians in Antioch, the leaders in Jerusalem chose Barnabas to go and find out more, and report back. Up till then the Gospel had only been preached to Jewish people, seen as the fulfilment of the Jewish faith. But now, in Antioch, Greek people were hearing the Good News and following Jesus. The leaders in Jerusalem had not expected this, and sent Barnabas to investigate. When Barnabas saw that many people who were not Jews were turning to Jesus and receiving the gift the Holy Spirit, their lives transformed, he was overjoyed, recognised that the Good News of Jesus is for everyone, and so he stayed there for a year to encourage the young church.

Earlier Barnabas had been great help Paul. Paul, previously known as Saul, the Pharisee who had been persecuting the Christians had an amazing conversion experience, but when, sometime later he tried to join the Christian group in Jerusalem they were wary. Was this a trick? Was the persecutor trying to infiltrate their group to destroy them? It was Barnabas,

who had seen Paul after the experience, and heard him preach about Jesus in Damascus, who listened to Paul’s story and convinced the others that he was genuine in saying he was now as follower of Jesus.

Later, Paul and Barnabas travelled together spreading the Gospel. A young man called John Mark had assisted them but dropped out part way through their journey; when they set out again on their travels Barnabas wanted to give John Mark a second chance, but Paul was dead set against it. So deep was the disagreement they agreed to go their separate ways, Paul joining up with Silas, and Barnabas with John Mark, and from then on the book Acts focuses on Paul’s story.

Two things strike me about the story of Barnabas. Firstly, the importance of listening to others and encouraging them.

Secondly, the book of Acts is an exciting one, full of stories of sermons that swayed crowds, spectacular visions, miracles, dramatic escapes from prison. But Barnabas is not recorded as having any dramatic experience. If he was present, he was in the background while Paul gave the speeches. Yet repeatedly Barnabas is trusted with responsible tasks, with solving problems, entrusted to carry money from one community to support another.

It strikes me he should be called the patron saint of ordinary unspectacular Christians who quietly get on with the job to the best of their ability, not seeking the limelight, but carrying out tasks responsibly and sensitively, willing to listen, valuing the people they meet on their journey.

Here's a reflection on that theme.

The Bridge

There are times in life
when we are called to be bridges;
not a great monument spanning a distance
and carrying loads of heavy traffic,
but a simple bridge to help one person
from here to there over some difficulty,

such as pain, grief, fear, loneliness;
a bridge which opens the way
for ongoing journey.
When I become a bridge for another ,
I bring upon myself a blessing,
for I escape from the small prison of self
and exist for the wider world,
breaking out to be a larger being
who can enter another's pain
and rejoice in another's triumph.
I know of only one greater blessing
in this life, and that is
to allow someone else
to be a bridge for me.

Copyright Joy Cowley – Aotearoa Psalms

Hymn StF668 Teach me my God and King

<https://youtu.be/N9ykXQ7eul8>

Teach me my God and king
in all things thee to see,
and what I do in anything
to do it as for thee.

For those who look on glass
on it may stay the eye
or if it pleases through it pass
and then the heaven espy.

All may of thee partake
nothing can be so mean
that with this tincture "for thy sake"
will not grow bright and clean.

A servant with this clause,
makes drudgery divine;
who sweeps a room as for thy laws
makes that and the action clean.

This is the famous stone
that turneth all to gold;
for that which God doth touch and own
cannot for less be told.

George Herbert 1593-1633

Prayer for others

Gracious God
You remind us that every human being is made
in your image.

As we watch the news our hearts go out to so
many suffering people in so many different
places. We find it bewildering and
overwhelming and we don't know how our
prayers can help. Yet you have taught us to
bring all our concerns to you
So lift to God now one situation from the news
that concerns you.....

Lift to God anyone personally known to you
who is going through a hard time.....

And pray that in some way they may know the
peace of the presence of Jesus.

Bring your prayers together with the prayer
that Jesus taught us. Our Father...

Lisa's reflection "The peace that Christ gives" inspired by Colossians Ch3: 15

It is difficult to feel peace whenever you see or
read the news and it can be difficult, to say the
least, to feel called to peace when you are
dealing with any challenge. Those of us who
live with chronic illness or increasing age which
keeps us often indoors can also find peace
elusive. The peace of Christ is a very different
sort of peace because it is linked to trust in
Him, which leads to hope. Peace and hope
seem to be rather a unique package to me and
I cannot imagine that one can exist without
the other.

One of my favourite songs is by a Christian
group called 'Eden's Bridge'. The song is called
'my hope is safe with thee',

'Though storms may rage
And I may fail
My strength will come from thee
Through wind and hail
You shield my sail
My hope is safe with thee'

We are always going to be buffeted by the
storms of life, but even if we do feel far from
peaceful our Lord Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

He understands our need for peace and offers it to us. When I look back over my life I can see that He has indeed 'shielded my sails' and got me into places of peace in ways I could never have thought likely or possible. I am sure many followers of Christ have similar experiences, even though at times that sense of peace may have eluded us.

As I write this, I am sitting by a picture of the Sea of Galilee with a little tea light burning beside it. It is my private place of prayer. The picture is a calm sea but I have read how storms could and still do rage there very suddenly. It reminds me too of the account of Jesus stilling the storm when the disciples were terrified and of the account of Jesus walking through the waves to them. At that point even those extraordinary but ordinary people, who were so blessed to spend time with Jesus on earth, still managed to lose their sense of peace, even though He was physically with them. Jesus wanted to comfort and give peace to his original disciples and he wants to give it to us who follow him today.

The Gospel of John records Jesus praying for us in chapter 17 verse 20. We don't know where we are going in this life quite often but we do know we are walking with the Lord who will be with us through everything. John 14 verse 27 records Jesus as saying 'my peace I give to you'.

I would like to finish this reflection with a prayer I read somewhere and use often:

'Lord Jesus Christ
You are the light of the world
Fill my mind with your peace
And my heart with your love
Amen'
Peace be with you.

Hymn StF495 Dear Lord and Father of
Mankind [Dear Lord and Father of mankind StF](#)
495

Dear Lord and Father of mankind
forgive our foolish ways,
reclothe us in our rightful mind

in purer lives thy service find
in deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard
beside the Syrian sea
the gracious calling of the Lord
let us like them without a word
rise up and follow thee.

O sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above
where Jesus knelt to share with thee
the silence of eternity
interpreted by love.

With that deep hush subduing all
our words and works that drown
the tender whisper of thy call,
as noiseless let thy blessing fall,
as fell thy manna down

Drop thy still dew of quietness
till all our strivings cease,
take from our souls the strain and stress
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
thy coolness and thy balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire,
speak through the earthquake wind and fire
O still small voice of calm.

John Greenleaf Whittier 1807-1892

Blessing

Now may the peace of God which passes all
understanding keep your hearts and minds in
knowledge and love of God and of Jesus Christ
our Lord. Amen

CCLI 30794