

DSW Methodist Circuit Written Service
Sheet for Sunday 25th September 2022

Revd Jane Wilson

Welcome to this time of worship wherever you are.

A Prayer of Approach

Loving God,
As we gather to worship you,
Help us to come with open hearts and minds
Ready to hear what you want to say to us today
Ready to sing your praises at the faith we have found
Ready to pray to you in trust and hope
Ready to honour you in all we do and say and are
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Song [STF 65]

Sing of the Lord's goodness, Father of all wisdom,
come to him and bless his name.
Mercy he has shown us, his love is for ever,
faithful to the end of days.
*Come then, all you nations, sing of your Lord's
goodness,
melodies of praise and thanks to God.
Ring out the Lord's glory, praise him with your music,
worship him and bless his name.*

Power he has wielded, honour is his garment,
risen from the snares of death.
His word he has spoken, one bread he has
broken,
new life he now gives to all.

Courage in our darkness, comfort in our sorrow,
Spirit of our God most high;
solace for the weary, pardon for the sinner,
splendour of the living God.

Praise him with your singing, praise him with the
trumpet,
praise God with the lute and harp;
praise him with the cymbals, praise him with your
dancing,
praise God till the end of days.

*Ernest Sands (b. 1949) © 1981 Ernest Sands, pub'd by OCP
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Prayer

Eternal God, you are the source of all blessing,
you created this wonderful world and each of us
in your image;
You have blessed us with the beauty of your
creation;

You have freed us from the power of sin and evil
and even death, through your Son Jesus Christ,
who lived and taught your ways of love and grace.
You have blessed us with the gift of your Holy
Spirit, your presence within us, teaching and
empowering us to do things we cannot do in our
own strength.

As we contemplate your amazing love and grace
we are aware that so often we've fallen short of
the ways of love you call us to in Jesus.
We bring to mind the things we've said and done
which we wish we hadn't
And the things we haven't said or done which we
wish we had,
We come to say we're truly sorry and ask for
your forgiveness.
Help us, Lord, to accept your gracious promise of
forgiveness and a fresh start with you,
And empower us to share your love and grace
with everyone we meet, knowing that we and
they are forgiven and loved by you.
In Jesus' name. Amen

Readings:

I Timothy 6:6-19 (Contemporary English Version)

And religion does make your life rich, by making
you content with what you have. We didn't bring
anything into this world, and we won't take
anything with us when we leave. So we should be
satisfied just to have food and clothes. People
who want to be rich fall into all sorts of
temptations and traps. They are caught by foolish
and harmful desires that drag them down and
destroy them. The love of money causes all kinds
of trouble. Some people want money so much
they have given up their faith and caused
themselves a lot of pain.

Timothy, you belong to God, so keep away from
all these evil things. Try your best to please God
and to be like him. Be faithful, loving, dependable,
and gentle. Fight a good fight for the faith and
claim eternal life. God offered it to you when you
clearly told about your faith, while so many
people listened. Now I ask you to make a
promise. Make it in the presence of God, who
gives life to all, and in the presence of Christ
Jesus, who openly told Pontius Pilate about his
faith. Promise to obey completely and fully all that
you have been told until our Lord Jesus Christ
returns.

The glorious God is the only Ruler, the King of
kings and Lord of lords.

At the time that God has already decided,
he will send Jesus Christ back again.

Only God lives forever!
And he lives in light that no one can come near.
No human has ever seen God or ever can see him.
God will be honoured, and his power will last forever. Amen.

Warn the rich people of this world not to be proud or to trust in wealth that is easily lost. Tell them to have faith in God, who is rich and blesses us with everything we need to enjoy life. Instruct them to do as many good deeds as they can and to help everyone. Remind the rich to be generous and share what they have. This will lay a solid foundation for the future, so they will know what true life is like.

Luke 16:19-31(CEV)

There was once a rich man who wore expensive clothes and every day ate the best food. But a poor beggar named Lazarus was brought to the gate of the rich man's house. He was happy just to eat the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. His body was covered with sores, and dogs kept coming up to lick them. The poor man died, and angels took him to the place of honour next to Abraham.

The rich man also died and was buried. He went to hell and was suffering terribly. When he looked up and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side, he said to Abraham, "Have pity on me! Send Lazarus to dip his finger in water and touch my tongue. I'm suffering terribly in this fire." Abraham answered, "My friend, remember that while you lived, you had everything good, and Lazarus had everything bad. Now he is happy, and you are in pain. And besides, there is a deep ditch between us, and no one from either side can cross over."

But the rich man said, "Abraham, then please send Lazarus to my father's home. Let him warn my five brothers, so they won't come to this horrible place."

Abraham answered, "Your brothers can read what Moses and the prophets wrote. They should pay attention to that."

Then the rich man said, "No, that's not enough! If only someone from the dead would go to them, they would listen and turn to God."

So Abraham said, "If they won't pay attention to Moses and the prophets, they won't listen even to someone who comes back from the dead."

Reflection

I wonder what strikes you as you read Luke's account of this rather challenging story Jesus told to the Pharisees? I wonder where we see ourselves in this story and where our sympathies lie?

Perhaps it seems a bit harsh that the rich man's pleas for help for himself and then for his brothers are not answered? Or perhaps it feels right that someone who overlooked the misery of the poor man on his doorstep in life should find himself in the similar position when he comes to his day of reckoning? After all, he and his brothers it seems were all aware of the teachings of the Old Testament prophets as messengers of God to look after the poor and oppressed.

It's interesting that only the poor man in this story is named, and the rich man goes nameless – perhaps a reverse reflection of his inability to see Lazarus as a human being.

Jesus's story reminds us that throughout the Bible, God makes clear that his heart is for those who are poor and marginalised and oppressed by those who are rich. Being rich in itself thought is not the problem – it's how we use our wealth and how the pursuit of wealth for its own sake can change our world and also change us.

Writing to Timothy, Paul reminds him that "we didn't bring anything into this world, and we won't take anything with us when we leave", a phrase similar to the words often spoken at funerals and reminiscent of the phrase commonly used by many people in everyday life: "You can't take it with you when you die!"

As Paul points out, it's the love of money that is dangerous because it hardens our attitudes and affects our ability to "see" others who are less well off or poor as human beings who matter, rather than problems or nuisances or worse.

Jesus had a lot to say about attitudes to money and about the oppression of the poor by the rich, as did the Old Testament prophets who came before him. When he told the rich man who came to ask what he should do to obey God, to sell what he owned and give the money to the poor, Jesus looked at him with love – because he knew the man could not bring himself to give up his wealth, put his trust in God and follow Jesus.

Paul too seems to have a deep concern, not only for the poor in his society, but also for the rich,

who are seemingly unaware of the dangerous territory of greed, obsession and a misplaced trust in money and possessions, rather than in God, into which they – and we perhaps? - can so easily be lured.

The chasm in Jesus' story reminds us of the chasm that still exists and, even worse, is still growing in our world today between the rich and poor.

Paul urges Timothy to warn the rich people eh knows to remember where real, meaningful and abundant life is found – which is not in wealth or possessions, but in pleasing God and walking in the way of Jesus.

Lazarus was invisible to the rich man, and we might reflect on where the “invisible poor” are in our neighbourhood and the wider world? And how do we respond to them? There is still much work to do to brook the gap between the world's richest and poorest, but as disciples of Jesus we're called to use our voices, our influence, our money and our consumer choices to help make a significant difference that will change that imbalance.

God sees every person as precious and we too are called to see them all through his eyes of love and compassion, to speak out and act against the injustice we see around us and to pray constantly for changed hearts and minds among those in power in the world so that transformation will come.

It was heartwarming to read recently about Yvon Chouinard, the 83-year-old billionaire owner of the Patagonia outdoor clothing company. As a keen mountain climber and nature lover, he decided in 1970, after buying a rugby shirt on a climbing trip in Scotland which he wore constantly on his return to the US, to find a way to source similar clothing for his fellow climbers and founded a company which later expanded into providing other outdoor clothing and equipment.

When he was added to the Forbes list of the world's richest people, he took it as a sign that he had failed in his life's mission to make the world a better and fairer place. So earlier this month he decided to give away all of the shares in his company Patagonia to a trust that will use future profits to help fight the climate crisis.

In a message to his staff and customers he said “Earth is now our only shareholder. Instead of ‘going public’, you could say we’re ‘going purpose’. Instead of extracting value from nature and transforming it into wealth for investors, we’ll use the wealth Patagonia creates to protect the source of all wealth.”

We may never be in a position to make such a gesture, but we can still make small but significant choices every day which will make a difference to our world and help to redistribute more fairly the wealth and resources of our world. We can continue to share the good news that real and abundant life comes not from manmade wealth but from a deep and personal relationship with the God who demonstrated his love for all people in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, through the power of his Holy Spirit. We can be aware of the poor in our midst and do our bit to help them in practical ways. And we can pray each day that God will fill us with his Spirit, his heart of love, his desire for justice, as he empowers us to be his agents of transformation in our world.

Song [STF 239]

Sent by the Lord am I;
my hands are ready now
to make the earth the place
in which the Kingdom comes.
Sent by the Lord am I;
my hands are ready now
to make the earth the place
in which the Kingdom comes.

The angels cannot change
a world of hurt and pain
Into a world of love,
of justice and of peace.
The task is mine to do,
To set it really free.
Oh help me to obey;
Help me to do your will.

Jose Aguiar ©1991 Jorge Maldonado

Prayers

God of love, God for all, your purposes are more beautiful than we can possibly imagine.
Fill us with your Holy Spirit. Help us let go of all that holds us back.
Open our lives and our churches to new seasons of humility and faith, of generosity and compassion; of change and growth. Shake us up with the Good News of Jesus and show us the way in these challenging times we pray.

We pray for people who struggle to find enough food, access to clean water and medication, or a safe place to live, in our country and in other parts of the world.

We ask you to heal wounded communities, and to transform the destructive power of selfishness into the desire to work for peace and justice and for a fair sharing of the world's resources for the good of all people, wherever they may be;

Generous God: **make us generous, too.**

Loving God,
like the landowner who met the needs of the workers in the vineyard, even those who'd begun work late in the day, you offer us unconditional love; we pray for those who don't know that that offer is for them too,

Give us the courage and the words to share the wonderful news of your saving love with others.

Generous God: **make us generous, too.**

We pray for everyone who is in pain today, whether emotional, physical or spiritual, remembering before you those who are particularly on our hearts this morning... Surround them with your healing love and peace, in their weakness, may they know your strength, in their despair, may they find hope and joy in you.

Generous God: **make us generous, too.**

In you, Father, we are one family on earth and in heaven. We remember those who have died, giving thanks especially for those who have shown us your grace in Jesus Christ. Help us to follow the example of all of your saints in light and bring us with them to the fullness of your eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn [STF 449]

Lord of creation, to you be all praise!

Most mighty your working, most wondrous your ways!

Your glory and might are beyond us to tell,
And yet in the heart of the humble you dwell.

Lord of all power, I give you my will,
In joyful obedience your tasks to fulfil.
Your bondage is freedom; your service is song;
And, held in your keeping, my weakness is strong.

Lord of all wisdom, I give you my mind,
Rich truth that surpasses my knowledge to find;

What eye has not seen and what ear has not heard
Is taught by your Spirit and shines from your word.

Lord of all bounty, I give you my heart;
I praise and adore you for all you impart,
Your love to inspire me, your counsel to guide,
Your presence to shield me, whatever betide.

Lord of all being, I give you my all;
If e'er I disown you, I stumble and fall;
But, led in your service your word to obey,
I'll walk in your freedom to the end of the way.

Jack Copley Winslow (1882-1974)

Blessing

Let us go into the world filled with grace and generosity, sharing with others the tender compassion of the God of love who created and redeemed us in the name of Jesus our Christ,
And may the blessing of God, our creator redeemer and sustainer be with us all always
Amen.