

Call to Worship

God is here. **His Spirit is with us.**

How great is this place, for it is the touching-place of God.

In Christ, we are gathered from the edges and woven into the dream. Here we feel the hint of heaven, where justice, love and mercy meet. Here we celebrate the blessedness of unity in God.

We, who were once far away, are brought near.

God, creator of all, in your love, you have made each one of us in your grace, you gather us together in your image in your mercy, you make us restless until we find our rest in you.

Disturb us in our contentment, distract us from our comforts,

deter us from our conflicts until your kingdom comes,

and your will is done. **Amen.**

Prayers

We gather to pray for the unity that is Christ's gift to the Church.

We gather in hope that the world might believe and be reconciled to God. We recognise that we are part of churches and communities that are divided by injustice, especially the sin of racism, which stands contrary to the image of God shining from every human face.

"And what does the Lord require of us but to do justice, and to love kindness, and walk humbly with our God?" (Micah 6:8)

And so we come in penitence and faith to confess, with prayers of heart and mind...

keep a period of Silence

Forgive us Lord, when we come to worship without walking humbly before you. **May we be forgiven.** We ask forgiveness for the complicity of churches in the evils of colonialism. **May we be forgiven.** We ask forgiveness for our sins of injustice and oppression. **May we be forgiven.** We have been called to unity. Forgive us anew and reconcile us to one another. May God's mercy free us from our sins, to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God. God of all, because of your great love our sins have been washed away and we are part of the beloved community. We come before you, a holy family, a rainbow people, united in the beautiful diversity of your creation. We celebrate the rich tapestry of the human family. We commit ourselves to overcome prejudice and disunity wherever we see it and to walk humbly in your presence. **Amen**

Ministry of the Word

Micah 6: 6 – 8: 6 'With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? 7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with tens of thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8 He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Luke 10: 25 – 37: ²⁵ Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus.^[a] ‘Teacher,’ he said, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ ²⁶ He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What do you read there?’ ²⁷ He answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.’ ²⁸ And he said to him, ‘You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.’

²⁹ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’ ³⁰ Jesus replied, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii,^[b] gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.” ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ ³⁷ He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’

Sermon

I wonder who you think of when you hear the word ‘hero’? We might think of a fictional superhero, someone like Captain America. Perhaps you’re thinking of a real-life hero instead, someone like Rosa Parks. But for Rosa, that sacrifice meant arrest, the loss of her job and receiving death threats for many years. I believe that heroes have one thing in common: **the willingness to make sacrifices for the good of others.**

Who are the heroes of our day? Using their voices, to stand up against injustice, Oppression, inequality. Are we heroes? Are we willing to stand up, to raise our voices, at the injustices in our community, among our congregations, among our families and friends.

Over the past couple of years I have sometimes driven past Dorchester Hospital, and nursing staff were out on a picket line, rather than providing, caring. Now whether you agree with all the strikes or not – I’ll leave that your consciences, to my mind - They work long hours, giving their lives sacrificially to be Christ to those who need their medical expertise and skills, they might be ‘the least’ or even the prime minister, regardless they offer their skills, use their knowledge to care, support and to try to make us better. They are heroes.

When I’m looking for a Biblical reference point, on whether to use my voice, to take action, there is no greater example than the parable of Good Samaritan, that we just read in Luke 10. In the parable, a lawyer seeks to test Jesus by asking him ‘Who is my neighbour?’ (10:29). Rather than answering directly, Jesus tells him a parable. A traveller is on his way from Jericho to Jerusalem along a road that was notoriously dangerous, full of sudden turnings so thieves could hide easily. The man is not only robbed but also stripped, beaten and left half dead (10:30).

Three men encounter the traveller but notice that there are only two responses. Two men do nothing to help the man (10:31-32) but one takes action. We’re going to look at this with three headings: passing by, taking action, doing likewise.

Firstly, passing by. That's what the priest does; why does he do nothing to help? Why do we find it so much easier to pass on by, than to stop, to ask, to acknowledge. If he suspected the traveller was dead, to touch him would've made the priest unclean for seven days, so he would lose his turn at the temple. The Old Testament Law says, "a priest must not make himself ceremonially unclean for any of his people who die". But the Law also says, "love your neighbour as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18), one of the two greatest commandments.

By doing nothing to help the traveller, the priest showed that his desire to lead worship in the temple was more important than the man's need. He wasn't willing to become unclean, to lay down his pride. In short - His own status came first.

The Levite's response is the same. Levites weren't priests but they assisted the priests, so here is another 'religious' person who puts his own pride first and passes on the other side. I wonder what we think might happen if we acknowledge the beggar in the street, or we say 'can we help' to someone physically struggling, or if we say – 'that's not acceptable' – in the face of racism, homophobia and inequality? I might be as bold to suggest that passing by, doing nothing, is unbiblical.

Secondly, taking action. The last person who Jesus' listeners would have expected to help, is the one who takes action: the **Samaritan**. The person who should be the traveller's enemy, alone "took pity" (10:33) on him. In Greek, the word for '**pity**' is the same as the word for '**intestines**', so the Samaritan has such a deep love for this half-dead man, it's as if it reaches his intestines, the depths of his being. It's gut-wrenching action of LOVE! That intense love causes him to act.

The Samaritan puts the man on his donkey, which would only have had room for one man meaning the Samaritan would've needed to walk the rest of the way to Jerusalem. He pays the innkeeper two Denarii, which may well have been enough for two months of board!

Not only that, he offered to repay the innkeeper for whatever more needed to be spent on the traveller's recovery. **These are big sacrifices for a friend, let alone for an enemy!** There is no doubt who the neighbour is in the parable. Are we good friends and neighbours among the Churches that make up the Christian community across our Circuit here in Dorset South and West?

The priest and the Levite must have felt pity for the half-dead traveller, but they did nothing. The man who took action in compassion, is the true neighbour. Walking Humbly with God, sometimes means accepting that we are not the right people to help someone, that humbly we may need to signpost them to someone with the gifts and skills and time to help them. The Good Samaritan provides us with a beautiful picture of showing mercy to an enemy and that is what Jesus himself did for us. Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice, willingly laying down his life while we were enemies of God to make us God's friends. The wounds of our sin were deep, but at the cross he healed them through his own wounds. We owed a debt much more than two Denarii because we have not loved God with our whole heart or loved our neighbour as ourselves.

Thirdly, doing likewise. The challenge that Jesus gave to the lawyer and gives to us is "**go and do likewise**" (10:37). The lawyer had been asking the wrong question: not 'Who is my neighbour?' but rather 'How can I be a neighbour to others?' Friends, it is not enough for us to feel sorry for those who are poor or we perceive to be in greater need than us. Jesus teaches us that our help

must be practical. Any person of any nation or religion who is in need is our neighbour. Our help must be as active and as wide as the love of God. When we take action for those who feel like 'the least' of this world, we do it for Jesus.

So we are called to be the Heroes, to provide opportunities for people to access health and healing, and when necessary – we are called to GO AND DO LIKEWISE, which means we must Act, responding to God's Love for us, with a DEEP, Gut Wrenching Love, for One another and our neighbours in the world. Walking in UNITY amidst the injustices of our world. Amen.

Prayer of Intercession – 'Stones and Stories'

*In our prayers for world, for the church and for those close to our hearts and minds, bring to mind the myriad of situations in our world that need prayer at this time, then draw your prayers closer thinking about the community around you. Then pray for the people who are most present in our hearts and minds today, those struggling with illness or a stay in hospital. Then finally take a moment to pray for yourselves, sharing or pleading with God for your situation and needs. **All this we pray in the knowledge that the God who holds us, knows us, and loves us. Now and forever.***

God of compassion and mercy, listen to our prayer. May what we ask in Jesus Christ your Son be done according to his word, who said, 'Ask, and you will receive, seek, and you will find, knock, and the door will be opened to you.' To you, merciful God, through your Son, in the life giving Spirit, be glory and praise for ever. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer: -

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done; On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And Lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, The power and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn – STF 446 – I will offer up my life

1 I will offer up my life in spirit and truth, pouring out the oil of love as my worship to you. In surrender I must give my every part; Lord, receive the sacrifice of a broken heart.

Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring to so faithful a friend, to so loving a King? Saviour, what can be said, what can be sung as a praise of your name for the things you have done? O, my words could not tell, not even in part, of the debt of love that is owed by this thankful heart.

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Blessing

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart. May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace. May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger, and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and turn their pain into joy.

And so, the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Be with you all, With those you love, And those you are called to love,
Now in the name of Christ. Amen.