**Dorset South and West Methodist Circuit**

**Written service 14 June 2020, Revd Jean Quick**

**Invitation to Worship**

Come Let us Worship as we remind ourselves that the Love of God never fails.

**Hymn (STF 137).**

New every morning is the love  our wakening and uprising prove;

through sleep and darkness safely brought, restored to life, and power, and thought.

New mercies, each returning day hover around us while we pray;

new perils past, new sins forgiven, new thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven.

If on our daily course our mind be set to hallow all we find,

new treasures still, of countless price, God will provide for sacrifice.

Old friends, old scenes, will lovelier be, as more of heaven in each we see;

some softening gleam of love and prayer shall dawn on every cross and care.

The trivial round, the common task, will furnish all we ought to ask;

room to deny ourselves, a road to bring us daily nearer God.

Prepare us, Lord, in your dear love for perfect rest with you above;

and help us, this and every day, to live more nearly as we pray.

John Keble (1792-1866)

**Prayers of Adoration and Confession**

O God, whose love we cannot measure,

nor even number thy blessings:

we bless and praise thee for all thy goodness,

who in our weakness art our strength,

in our darkness, light,

in our sorrows, comfort and peace,

and from everlasting to everlasting art our God,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen

( taken from The Indian book of common prayer)

**A prayer of confession**

Heavenly Father, we confess to you our fears, our worries, and our anxieties. You have given us your perfect love which casts out all fear and your peace which transcends all understanding, but even still we feel dislodged, displaced, untethered, and uncertain during these times. We believe, Lord;​ help our unbelief.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

O God, make speed to save us.

O Lord, make haste to help us.

Words of assurance

For he has said, “I will never leave you or forsake you.” So we can say with confidence,

 “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me? [Hebrew 13:5-6 ]

(From a Lutheran liturgy)

**Reading Genesis 18: 1-15**

The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, ‘My lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.’ So they said, ‘Do as you have said.’ And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, ‘Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.’ Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

They said to him, ‘Where is your wife Sarah?’ And he said, ‘There, in the tent.’ Then one said, ‘I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.’ And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, ‘After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?’ The Lord said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh, and say, “Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?” Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.’ But Sarah denied, saying, ‘I did not laugh’; for she was afraid. He said, ‘Oh yes, you did laugh.’

**Reflection**

Three visitors to Abraham and Sarah’s tent. That would be nice today to have three visitors with no concerns about contact safe distancing etc. We are not told who these three are but the implication is that they represent the Lord visit. Last week was Trinity Sunday when we explored the idea of one God in three persons. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

I wonder if one good spin off of this crisis that we are in is that we notice people more and hunger for any conversation or exchange of words? There may indeed be days weeks when we are lucky if we get the chance to see or speak to three people.

Who are the people you meet and perhaps acknowledge now that sadly we never even gave a second glance to before times became difficult? The refuse collectors, the supermarket checkout person, the carer in whatever capacity we meet them? Who might the Lord be revealing himself through to you?

We perhaps recall the sad story of Babushka who was so busy preparing and trying to be perfect for the Christ child’s coming.

Even when the three kings called at her house and invited her to come with them she said she wasn’t ready and she missed the most important opportunity of her life.

What does your world look like? Are you still self isolating? Are you wondering what this

’new normal might look like’? Do you have hope for the future?

How many weeks have passed since Easter? Which was how long after lockdown began?

Before the pandemic and even more so now the challenge has always been, are we living in a Good Friday world that is bleak and without hope? Or are we living in an Easter Sunday resurrection world in which even death itself has been defeated and nothing in heaven or hell can separate us from the love of God which is ours through the sacrifice made for us in Christ Jesus.

In Romans 5 we read. Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

This is our hope, but the reality is ever around us. People have died in their tens of thousands and an invisible virus threatens our lives and has untold consequences for our future.

For Abraham the reality was that he and his wife were old. In today’s reality they would have been high risk and no doubt having to self isolate! But in the ‘heat of the day’ that Abraham faced, he clearly hoped that this encounter with the heavenly visitors would bring him some blessings or relief.

But… Did he really believe God would bless him?

 Did he really believe he was worth Gods blessings?

 Did he believe life could be any different?

Despite what seems like his being in some sort of self imposed lockdown from God, or feeling that he was not worthy to be in God’s presence. Notice his response to the visitors?

 He greets them and looks for simple ways to serve them. Bringing water and food. In today’s world I wonder if that might equate to greeting the stranger we pass at a safe distance and seeing what we might be able to spare for the food bank?

When I spent some time in Botswana, from the outset I was taught that you must stop and greet every person you meet along the way with the traditional greeting of ‘Dumela Ma’, for a lady and ‘Dumela Ra’ for a gentleman’. Because I was told, you never know when you might need the help of a stranger. Any walk took a very long time as this social pleasantry was strictly and pleasantly observed.

How do we open ourselves to the stranger in our midst? And for what reasons?

Mathew 9:35

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.’

**Prayers for Others and Ourselves**

We pray for:

For those who put themselves second in the service of others. we thank God for all who serve us in so many different ways. For all carers, the many different service providers, and the multitude of volunteers stepping up to help in these unprecedented times.

We pray for:

For those who have lost loved ones. We think of the terrible loss of life in this Global pandemic.

We hear the mounting toll in our country and across the world. This crisis has turned the whole world upside down and we pray especially for those areas of our world where disparity was great before the crisis and is even greater now.

We thank God for glimmers of hope, nations now thinking and acting to feed and house the poor

The kind acts that are growing in individuals and communities

We pray for:

For those who are worried about loved ones who are ill or frail

For those who have lost their jobs

For Governments and the unimaginable tasks they need to perform to bring their nations through the pandemic and the economic crisis it has created.

Lastly we bring our own personal worries and concerns to God. We take a moment to pour out all we need to share with Him and reflect upon how He promises that we can cast our care upon Him because He cares deeply for us.

Thanks be God.

Amen

The Lord’s Prayer.

**Offering. Psalm 116**

I love the Lord, because he has heard

 my voice and my supplications.

Because he inclined his ear to me,

 therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

What shall I return to the Lord

 for all his bounty to me?

I will lift up the cup of salvation

 and call on the name of the Lord,

I will pay my vows to the Lord

 in the presence of all his people.

A question to answer in quietness before God? …………How can I make a difference this week?

What will you offer to God this week and in gratitude for all the blessings bestowed upon you?

 Take a moment to think silently about what you are grateful for

 and then, think how you can share your gratitude and make a difference?

 What can I give him poor as I am

 If I were ……the simple acts of caring and kindness

 If I were a …….the wisdom we are given to do what ever we can

 What I can I give Him

Give him your heart in the service of others.

**Hymn STF 256 When I needed a neighbour, were you there?**

When I needed a neighbour, were you there, were you there? When I needed a neighbour, were you there?

*And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, were you there?*

I was hungry and thirsty, were you there, were you there? I was hungry and thirsty, were you there?

 *And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, were you there*

I was cold, I was naked, were you there, were you there? I was cold, I was naked, were you there?

 *And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, were you there*

When I needed a shelter, were you there, were you there? When I needed a shelter, were you there?

 *And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, were you there*

When I needed a healer, were you there, were you there? When I needed a healer, were you there?

Wherever you travel I'll be there, I'll be there, wherever you travel I'll be there.

 *And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, I'll be there.*

Sydney Carter (1915-2004)

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**The Blessing followed by a virtual sharing of the Grace.**

Words from St Julian of Norwich

 All shall be well,

 And all shall be well,

 And all manner of things shall be well.

Thanks be to God. Amen

As you come to share in reading the Grace think first about who will be reading this and sharing the reading of Grace…..those from our churches and circuit and those who are near and dear to us.

We say together :

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God be with us all now and always Amen.