

### **Call to Worship**

We look in the mirror and what do we see? **We see people who try to be faithful, even as questions and struggles challenge our faith.**

We look in the mirror and how do we see? **We see with hearts which are open to God's love, with lives which seek to trust when all the evidence tells us not to be so foolish.**

We look in the mirror and who do we see? **We see Jesus, the One who struggles with the questions we raise, who models faithfulness for all who would follow.**

We come to worship you, we come to follow you, now and forever – our LORD of Hope, Peace and Love. Amen

### **Opening Prayer**

We are small before you. **Your love is great.**

We depend on you. **You feed us.**

We cannot justify our lives. **You love us for our sake.**

We are always learning. **You are always leading.**

We are in wonder. **You are beyond our understanding.**

We belong to you. **You hold us.**

We have your eyes. **You have our lives.**

We hold your hand. **You hold our hand.**

We are in your arms. **You are happy. Amen**

### **Prayer of Confession: -**

Loving Jesus, we confess that we don't always want to help others. We want to help ourselves first. We are tired of working so hard. We have so much to do. We have so little time. We want someone else to do the work. But You continue to call us to the work of justice. You continue to remind us that You came so that we might have life. Your death and resurrection continue to remind us that we must put other's needs above our desires. Call to us to rise, to roll up our sleeves, and to do the work You have given us to do.

*We pause to bring confessions of heart and mind to God*

In Christ Jesus there is rest and assurance. We are renewed for the journey, so we have the strength, and the courage, to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. Know that you are forgiven, loved, and restored, and in Christ there is perfect peace and rest. Rise, and do the work Christ has called you to do. Amen.

### **Readings:**

**Hebrews 4: 12 – 16:** - Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account. Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

**Mark 10: 17 – 31:** - As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is

good but God alone. You know the commandments: “You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother.” ’ He said to him, ‘Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.’ Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, ‘You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.’ When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, ‘How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!’ And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, ‘Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.’ They were greatly astounded and said to one another, ‘Then who can be saved?’ Jesus looked at them and said, ‘For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.’ Peter began to say to him, ‘Look, we have left everything and followed you.’ Jesus said, ‘Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.’

### Sermon

If any of you have watched the JRR Tolkien’s “The Lord Of the Rings” films or read the books, you will know the marvelous depiction of the character Smeagol. Who loses his friends, everything he knows, even his name. In the pursuit of his “precious”, the Golden, powerful, magical **Ring**. What is the most precious item you have in the world? For it is my Wedding Ring. A symbol of the Love and commitment that Cora and I made, in the presence of God, through God’s grace and mercy. Now think of everything you own – everything you have built up, your houses, cars, money in the bank, your music collections, tv’s, mobile phones, everything you own.

Now imagine Jesus walking through the beautiful Red door at the front of our church this morning, and saying: *Sell it all. And you will store up Treasure in Heaven, Drop Everything and everyone – Come and follow me.*

**How would you react?** In order for us to see and experience the truth found in Jesus, that leads to real life, life eternal with God, the Rich man and we, have to turn from our Precious things, turning instead, in Faith – to God. Because in God, all things are possible. Let’s dive into our readings from Hebrews and Mark this morning and see where the spirit leads us.

### **All things are possible in God, Come and Follow Me . . .**

Mark gives us an intriguing tale of the Rich, young ruler, who kneels before Jesus, and asks with passion and determination in his voice: *“What must I do to inherit Eternal Life?”* Now for Jesus I am sure this is a gem of an opportunity. But so often when Jesus encounters a moment like this – he does the unexpected, even the extraordinary – and this is no exception. He could have said – *Nice job, you are calling me, you know I am the son of God, look how hard you have worked, to gain all these possessions. Wow your amazing – Come Join the club.*

But we know from reading on a couple of verses, Jesus couldn’t go further from that, if you tried. Stunning the disciples and deflating the young man. The text tells us: *“Jesus looking at him, **loved him**, and told him to sell what he owns, to give all he has to the poor. Then, Come and follow me”.*

**“Jesus Loved Him”.** Because he loved him, because he knew him, He could say the truthful thing, the hard, unpalatable thing. He could say, drop your precious possessions, give them to the poor, then, come and follow me. But – **this is counter-cultural to our world today.** We are so driven but what we have, the next best version of the perfectly good phone we already have. The latest trend in fashion. The convenience of a ready cooked

meal that we can just heat up in the microwave and eat. **Jesus declares – no – leave this behind, then you can come and follow me.**

To use a modern military phrase – these are shock and awe tactics by Jesus. Jesus is saying to this young man, **to us**, you cannot know the truth of abundance, mercy and grace – until you let go of all you hold dear, and you truly free yourselves to follow him. We are challenged then to look at all those things we hold dear, about our churches and communities, our project and missions. And we're asked to think of those things we hold dear, that we need to let go of, to continue to follow Jesus in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We are the Church of the rich man, in worldly terms, sell all you, give to poor, then follow me. Jesus challenges us to think of our neighbors, to love them by offering all we have, in order that we may come to know with our whole hearts what it is to be immeasurably Love God, as first Christ loved us.

### **All things are possible in God, Come and Follow Me . . .**

If we have enough disposable income to go and buy a newspaper every day or most days, then we are among the top 10% richest people on this planet. Maybe there are things that we need to let go of, in order that God can teach us more about our need to love our neighbours and to Love God. For our church today, we have to recognize that this gospel passage is necessarily tough. This is a put up or shut up challenge from Jesus. What do we need to let go of, in order to truly understand the abundance and grace of God's Love, hope and peace, for us and for all the world.

In all this we are reminded of those words of wisdom and comfort, from Jesus: **All things are possible in God.** This is important because God cares for so deeply. Jesus came amongst us to share our lives and to become, as Paul writes to Hebrew, "our great high priest". Jesus created a pathway between God's life and ours, through the power of the Holy Spirit. This has to be source of great comfort and hope. Because God's love is freely given, through Christ, for all people. Rich and Poor alike, we just have to be prepared to submit to God's Mercy and Grace, to be put to the tasks that God puts before, and to Love both God and our neighbours, equally and wholeheartedly.

I finish this morning by declaring that most powerful of truths, that Love is the currency of eternal life. Both the have's and the have not's are beloved children of God. We are brothers and Sisters of the same God, the same Jesus, the same Holy Spirit. And so equally we are called to let go of our earthly possessions, that God's love may fill, renew and transform us. If we're willing to engage with the tensions in these readings, they can offer us surprising clues about who God is and what he cherishes. God loves us enough, to let us walk away. God does not allow us to rest on past glories or history. God is a God of love, whose grace cuts deeper than a sword. May we dare to wrestle past what we have always known and done. For God is with us, and in God, **all things are possible.** May God bless us, may we accept the challenge to give up all we know, that he might receive us into the glory of his eternal kingdom. Not yesterday, not tomorrow, but TODAY. Amen.

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Let us pray for the Church of God throughout the world, for . . . and for . . . Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.** Let us pray for those who have power and influence and for all who govern the nations, for . . . and for . . . Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.** Let us pray for the powerless, for all victims of famine and war, and for all who strive for justice and peace, for . . . and for . . . Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.** Let us pray for the afflicted and sorrowful and for all who need our prayers, for . . . and for . . . Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.** Let us remember before God those who have passed from this life in faith and obedience, giving thanks for . . . and for . . . Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.** Eternal God, through the self-offering of your Son you have filled our lives with your presence. Help us in our sufferings and trials and strengthen us in our weakness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer:**

*We say together the prayer that Jesus gave us: 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 that 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.*

### **A prayer for all we offer in service of the Kingdom in this place**

Lord and Giver of every good thing, we bring to you our lives and gifts for your kingdom, all for transformation through your grace and love, made known in Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen.**

### **Hymn – STF 673 – Will you come and follow me**

1 Will you come and follow me  
if I but call your name?  
Will you go where you don't know  
and never be the same?  
Will you let my love be shown,  
will you let my name be known,  
will you let my life be grown  
in you and you in me?

2 Will you leave yourself behind  
if I but call your name?  
Will you care for cruel and kind  
and never be the same?  
Will you risk the hostile stare  
should your life attract or scare?  
Will you let me answer prayer  
in you and you in me?

3 Will you let the blinded see  
if I but call your name?  
Will you set the prisoners free  
and never be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean,  
and do such as this unseen,

and admit to what I mean  
in you and you in me?

4 Will you love the 'you' you hide  
if I but call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside  
and never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found  
to reshape the world around,  
through my sight and touch and sound  
in you and you in me?

5 Lord, your summons echoes true  
when you but call my name.  
Let me turn and follow you  
and never be the same.  
In your company I'll go  
where your love and footsteps show.  
Thus I'll move and live and grow  
in you and you in me.

John L. Bell (b. 1949)  
and Graham Maule (b. 1958)  
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### **Blessing**

Let us take on this week's life with renewed hope and imagination  
With faith to face our challenges,  
With love that casts out fear,  
With hope to trust tomorrow,

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