

Call to Worship

Blessed are those who trust - in God! **We come in trust, to be grounded in God's love.**

Blessed are those who hope - in God! **We come in hope, trusting in the One who gives us life.**

Blessed are those who delight - in God's Word! **We come to hear God speak, hoping for healing and joy.**

Come, Now is the time to worship our God of Love, Hope and Peace. Be inspired, Be Fired and be Freed. Amen.

Hymn: - STF 544 – As the Deer Pants

1 As the deer pants for the water,
so my soul longs after you.

You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.

*You alone are my strength, my shield,
to you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.*

2 I want you more than gold or silver,
only you can satisfy.

You alone are the real joy-giver
and the apple of my eye.

3 You're my friend and you are my brother,
even though you are a king.
I love you more than any other,
so much more than anything.

Martin J. Nystrom (b. 1956)
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Prayer of Thanks: -

Holy God, by your grace: you touch our fears with the fire of your compassion; You touch our brokenness with the fire of your forgiveness; You touch our hearts with the fire of your love.

Jesus Christ, by your grace: you step into our lives and an unpredictable journey begins; you challenge us to new thinking, with overflowing results; you so confront our doubts that we can cast out our fears.

Holy Spirit, by your grace: you give us eyes to see the emptiness of our world; you give us ears to hear the good news; you give us words to bring hope to all people. God in Community, Holy in One, by your grace we are who we are: **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession: -

We have failed to love you with all our heart and to be good stewards of your creation: Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.** We have failed to take up the cross of discipleship and to be good stewards of your gospel: Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.** We have failed to be faithful members of your church and to be good stewards of your spiritual gifts: Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

The good news is that all who trust in Christ will have their sins forgiven and receive eternal life. As you hold this faith, I declare that you are set free from all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, to whom be glory for ever and ever.

Thanks be to God. Amen

Readings:

1 Corinthians 15: 12 – 30

¹² Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; ¹⁴ and if Christ has not been

raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. ¹⁷ If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have died^[a] in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.^[b] ²¹ For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; ²² for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴ Then comes the end,^[c] when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For ‘God^[d] has put all things in subjection under his feet.’ But when it says, ‘All things are put in subjection’, it is plain that this does not include the one who put all things in subjection under him. ²⁸ When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all. ²⁹ Otherwise, what will those people do who receive baptism on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? ³⁰ And why are we putting ourselves in danger every hour?

Luke 6: 17 – 26:

¹⁷ He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. ¹⁸ They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹ And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them. ²⁰ Then he looked up at his disciples and said: ‘Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. ²¹ ‘Blessed are you who are hungry now,

for you will be filled. ‘Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.²² ‘Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you^[a] on account of the Son of Man. ²³ Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets. ²⁴ ‘But woe to you who are rich,

for you have received your consolation. ²⁵ ‘Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. ‘Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. ²⁶ ‘Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

Sermon

Let’s pray:

Dear God, you light the way of true life. We look up to Jesus for his courage and kindness. He shows us how to be brave and follow you. Empower us by your Holy Spirit to turn away from temptations and live as disciples who love and trust you. We pray in Jesus’ name, the way, the truth and the life. **Amen.**

“The whole place is a mess. I want you to go in there and tidy it up!” **mExclaimed** the chair of governors to the new head teacher of a local primary school. The school had been in bad shape for a while, and the time had come to sort it out, to put everything back into its appropriate order! There are times when institutions can be allowed to develop unchecked, to float free and see what happens; but there comes a time when someone has to take things firmly by the scruff of the neck and bring them back into shape. As Paul declares in this powerful reading from his letter to the people of Corinth – the Resurrection of Jesus was the moment when the one true God appointed the man through whom the whole cosmos would be brought back into its proper order. And from Luke, in his version of the Beatitudes Jesus speaks of how those who are poor, hungry and weeping will be blessed by God. And conversely those who are rich, prosperous, laughing and praised, will experience woe and lament. Ultimately – both these passages call us to a choice between trusting our own strength, wisdom and

ways of being or embracing the way of Jesus – Lord, Savior and redeemer, for all. So let's dive into our readings and see where the spirit takes us today.

Lets begin by taking a few moments to look at this portion of Paul's Letter. It seems to me that Paul is concerned with the interplay between our: **Physical** – Life & Death And our **Spiritual** - Life and Death. The focus here is on **Hope**. The Hope that through Jesus Christ – Death does not have the final word, because God overcame death, and brought Jesus Back to life. There's is also the **Hope** that, that same Resurrection to Life Eternal – is available for each one of us, if we follow the pattern of life set out by Jesus, if we profess him as Lord and Savior and if we Love God and Love our neighbors. And because of that **HOPE** we are called to be **Courageous & Faithful**, in life, responding the trials and temptations of our world, and all that it throws at us, with a love so powerful that it overcomes all things – even Death on the cross. Quite simply we are called as followers of Jesus to imitate God: As all-inclusive, forgiving, welcoming, justice making and relational individuals and communities of faith. God is **Love** and we should be powered, inspired and energized by that love, sharing it between ourselves and with the world – **WHY?** – Because God's love was poured out on the cross and recreated through the glory of the resurrection of Christ.

So now let's spend some time looking at Luke's account of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount – the Beatitudes. The first thing to note is that it is quite different from the familiar version we find in Matthew's Gospel. In this version then, Jesus has just been up the side of the mountain and shared some prayer time with God. He's now come down the mountain, gathered his disciples around him, presumably to teach them, but we are also aware they have come down – so that there is space for the crowd that has gathered. Using our modern language - the crowd is **Diverse**, maybe even **multicultural**. Many different people are gathered in this place, some would be from the fringes of community, the marginalized, the disease ridden, those who were determined to have "unclean spirits" within them.

This was a motley crew – seeking to hear God's word from Jesus, but desperately seeking Hope, Justice and healing. Jesus says *Blessed are . . .* The Poor; The Hungry; The Homeless; The Sick
The powerless; The lonely; The pushed down; The Left out; The Crushed. **I'm sure we've all be one of those** at one time or the other, we might be one of those right now. Quite simply that is a Christian duty – to have a heart for those who are not blessed in the world's eyes, but are blessed always in the eyes of God, and from the mouth of Christ.

But Jesus doesn't just focus his words this morning on those who are to be blessed. He uses a set of phrases, that I think are unique to Luke's version of this particular episode in Christ's life, that begin: *Woe to you ...* Who are: **Rich; Full right now; Laughing Now**. Jesus came to bring a new message, to bring a new Order, in the chaos and mess of the world. The last shall be first, and first shall be last. Beware says Jesus – all who are comfortable, finding life easy, coasting along, without a care in the world. My life, My Death, My Resurrection means that you will need to be humble, on your knees, that you fully know the power of Gods Love, Mercy and Salvation. This is essentially about modifying our natural inclinations, the ways we behave, so that we live by the Love poured out for us in Christ, and we share that love with one another and with our neighbors in the world.

This set of blessings and woes – should make us uncomfortable. By the world's standards – if we can afford to by a Newspaper or a pint of milk – WE ARE RICH. If we can pick and choose when we eat, and eat largely what we want – WE ARE FULL. If we choose to ignore the poverty, pain and frustrations of the world – WE ARE LAUGHING at the world. John Wesley, when reflecting on Luke 6 says that "prosperity is sweet poison". Sweet when you have it, and poison when you hoard it for yourselves. God calls us to be mindful of what we have, not to be guilty of what we have and others don't, but to find ways of using our disposal resources to help those who don't have the abundance of Richness, Fullness and joy that we might have. We are as Paul reminds us so often, called to see the world, our faith and our neighbors, from Christ's abundant viewpoint of sacrifice and Love.

You might say that Grace is **Free & Abundant**, but it is not cheap. Luke and Paul remind us that our high calling is to love unconditionally, as God Loves each one of us. How we apply that blessing of Love, is really at the heart of this passage. Jesus' love was demonstrated in his powerful healing ministry, coming alongside those in need, the marginalized, the forgotten, given them hope, freedom a new life. If we live in that Love – then **NOW WHAT?** - what are we going to do to bring about healing, freedom from hopelessness, and walking alongside the lonely? We can't possibly love in the power of our own strength and wisdom. We must be guided, shaped, transformed and empowered by God, Father – Son and Holy Spirit. What expectations does our community have of us, as a Faith Community? How do we live out Christ's love, blessing and hope, in the way we do church here across the Dorset South and West Methodist Circuit? How do we show more Love. More Freedom. More Hope – in our own everyday lives, so that those outside the community might capture a glimpse the power of God's heart to renew and transform?

Wesley wrote of the character of his Methodist People in 1743: *And while he thus always exercises his love to God, by praying without ceasing, rejoicing evermore, and in everything giving thanks, this commandment is written in his heart, 'That he who loveth God, love his brother also.'* Woe betide us – if we are blessed, and we do not find ways of sharing it. Woe betide us – if we love God, and are loved by God, and we don't declare it, live by it and share it with the world. How do you intend to fulfil your calling to Love God and Love our Neighbor? I intend to share the hope, love and peace of Christ, who came to sort out the mess of our church, the mess of our world, and the mess of our lives, and bring us back to peace, sanctuary and Love of God. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

For this prayer you might like to hold up your hand, with your thumb resting near your heart, and the rest of your fingers spread out in front of you with your little finger the furthest away.

Wiggle your little finger – and pray For the World

Wiggle your next finger – and pray For The Church

Wiggle your middle finger – and pray For the Community you live

Wiggle your index finger – and pray for For those close to our hearts and minds

Now wiggle your thumb – and pray for yourself and your needs this day.

God of compassion and Mercy, Listen to our prayers, And respond according to our Lord Jesus Christ, Who Said: Ask and you will receive Seek and you will find Knock and the door will be opened to you. So to you merciful God, Be Glory and praise forever, 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.

Blessing

Our worship has not ended, it has just begun, For God is with us, every moment of every day. May God make us strong in faith And guide us in truth and love. And may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Be with you, With those you love And those you are called to love, Now in the name of Christ. Amen.