



DSW Written Service Sunday 20 July 2025
Bible Month: John's Gospel – Week 3

Call to worship

Come let us worship our faithful God, let us give thanks and praise to the Lord, for he is good!

Hymn [STF 531]

What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit!
O what needless pain we bear!
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged;
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness;
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour, still our refuge,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,
Thou wilt find a solace there.

Joseph Medlicott Scriven (1819-1886)

Prayer

Lord, you are the power that makes the cosmos,
you are the force which drives all things.
Yet you have walked the earth as one of us
and your shining Spirit whispers love and
gentleness to us.

As we bring ourselves into your presence
to offer praise and prayer, Lord, fill us with your
loving Spirit and bless us with your loving care.

Amen.

Reading: John, Chapters 13-17

Reflection (1)

This month our circuit is following Bible Month which this year focuses on John's gospel. This week we're invited to read and reflect on John chapters 13-17, often referred to as Jesus's "farewell discourses", in which he's preparing his disciples for his death and resurrection, and teaching them how to be disciples for their future mission as his followers.

Below are some highlights to reflect on.

In chapter 13 there's a strong emphasis on the importance of loving service and sacrifice in creating a community of humility and love. In v.13:34 Jesus gives a new commandment: to love one another as he has loved us. And then in a shocking act of humility which signals the amazing act of sacrifice which follows the next day, Jesus kneels to lovingly wash the feet of each of his disciples, including Judas, who will betray him, and Peter, who will deny knowing him, in the coming days.

As disciples we're all learners, and sometimes we struggle to accept humble service, especially when it's offered by someone we really respect. It can be just as hard to be humble towards others, but humility, alongside mercy and compassion, is at the heart of Jesus' teachings.

Reflecting on Jesus washing the feet of his followers, what might be an equivalent act of humility for you today?

Reading on into chapter 14, Jesus talks about his imminent departure and urges his disciples to live out the radical gospel of unconditional love that he has always modelled. For them, and for us, that means living by this new commandment to love one another with a love so unique that it will be obvious to everyone.

That's as much a challenge today as it was for the early Christians, but as Jesus explains, we have the gift of his Holy Spirit, who will remind us of the teaching and ways of Jesus and help us to live our lives according to those ways – ways which are deeply countercultural, even today.

Hymn [STF 242]

A new commandment
I give unto you,
That you love one another
As I have loved you,
That you love one another
As I have loved you.
By this the world shall know

That you are My disciples,
If you have love one for another.
By this the world shall know
That you are My disciples,
If you have love one for another.

Author unknown.

Reflection (2)

Jesus's statement "I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life" (14:6) is an invitation to go deeper into relationship with him, as we learn more about the meaning of his life, death and resurrection, and the love, truth and unity that lie at the heart of his relationship with his Father, which is his desire for us too.

In John 14:16-17 and 16:13-15, Jesus promises us the gift of his Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, who will live within us and guide us into all truth. This reminds us that our potential for learning more about God and Jesus is unlimited.

John's readers saw a lot of dishonesty and corruption, with people using the truth to benefit themselves and get rich, or twisting the truth to suit their own needs – and we can see the same attitudes in today's world. Jesus' promise to send the Holy Spirit of Truth to guide us is a great comfort but also a challenge to us to commit ourselves to always live and speak the truth.

What would it mean to trust the Spirit completely to guide you "into all the truth"? Can you think of any ways in which, as a member of the community of love that is the church, you've experienced the Holy Spirit as teacher and comforter, guiding you into new truths about the love of God in Jesus, about yourself, about others and the world?

In chapter 15 Jesus uses the image of a vine to explain the deeply interconnected relationship that God desires to have with us.

On a visit to Hampton Court Palace recently I saw the oldest grape vine in the UK (250 years old) whose branches were inextricably woven around each other.

We had a grape vine in the garden of one manse we lived and one year it grew along the whole length of the garden wall. It was wonderful to watch and see how intricately the vine branches entwined with each other as they grew.

Both were visual reminders of the way Jesus used the image of this plant to communicate and help his disciples understand how deeply embedded in every aspect of our lives God in Jesus wants to be, because of the depth of his love for us.

How does it feel to know that God in Jesus wants to be as close to you as one vine branch is to another?

We're all closely connected to Jesus, like the branches of a vine. The question is, are we ready to be cultivated by God? Not just to be watered, nourished, cared for, but also pruned and trained so that we can grow and be productive? Or will we be one of the unproductive vines that gets dug up and thrown away? Even if we do produce fruit, that doesn't mean we'll live a trouble free life because Jesus tells us that the world will always be against God's way, and we should expect to be treated the way Jesus was. Again he emphasise the need for love because love is what holds our community together and makes the vineyard grow. Vines in a vineyard have one purpose to produce beautiful fruit that will enrich people's lives.

If we're branches of the vine, how can we make sure our fruit is nourishing and beautiful and brings joy to others?

Later in vv13-15 Jesus describes the depth of his love in laying down his life for his friends. How do you feel about the idea of Jesus calling you his friend?

In chapter 17, Jesus teaches his disciples about prayer, encouraging them to ask for what they need in his name and in faith that God will answer. Then, in chapter 18, we learn of the prayer he prayed in front of his disciples, and witness the deep intimacy of the relationship between Jesus and the Father, and the intensity of the love and truth which unites them.

Jesus prays that we, his people, "may have the full measure of my joy within them" (17:13) and that those who believe in Jesus (that's us!) may be as one and have the same love God has for Jesus in us.

What part does joy play in your experience of being a disciple of Jesus today?

You may want to spend some time in the coming days quietly reading through these chapters and reflecting on how they speak to you. As you reflect prayerfully you could ask God to teach you to be open to learning about him, and to fill you afresh with his joy and his love as you seek to serve him by serving others in love and humility.

Hymn [STF 249]

*Jesu, Jesu,
Fill us with your love,
Show us how to serve,
The neighbours we have from you.
Kneels at the feet of his friends,
Silently washes their feet,
Master who acts as a slave to them.
Jesu, Jesu.....*

Neighbours are rich folk and poor,
Neighbours are black folk and white,
Neighbours are nearby and far away,
Jesu, Jesu.....

These are the ones we should serve,
These are the ones we should love,
All these are neighbours to us and you,
Jesu, Jesu.....

Kneel at the feet of our friends,
Silently washing their feet,
This is the way we should live with you.
Jesu, Jesu.....

North Ghanain song adapted by Tom Colvin (1925-2000)

Prayers

God, you are our father,
and made us to be your children.
We praise you for giving us life,
and ask you to fill us with your love.

Jesus, you are God's son,
and call us to be your sisters and brothers.
We praise you for showing us your care,
and ask you to fill us with your love.

Holy Spirit, you come to be our helper and guide.
We praise you for being with us always,
and ask you to fill us with your love.

Amen.

Heavenly Father, we pray for all the places in the world that need your peace:
places where wars continue to threaten the stability of the nations;
and the lack of peace has caused so much destruction;
places where people have to flee their homes, their families destroyed, lives lost.
Lord, bring your peace which passes all understanding.

Give wisdom to world leaders:
to presidents, prime ministers, politicians of all governments,

that they may strive for lasting peace and true justice,
not putting personal ambitions before the needs of their people.
Lord, bring your peace which passes all understanding.

We pray for those who need peace of mind:
those weighed down by the stresses and strains of everyday life,
or who suffer with anxiety, or are oppressed by worry and fear;
for those who find it hard to let go of things and simply trust.
Lord, bring your peace which passes all understanding. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn [STF 76]

Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising,
Give me joy in my heart, I pray.
Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising,
Keep me praising till the break of day:

*Sing hosanna! Sing hosanna!
Sing hosanna to the King of kings!
Sing hosanna! Sing hosanna!
Sing hosanna to the King!*

Give me peace in my heart, keep me loving,
Give me peace in my heart, I pray.
Give me peace in my heart, keep me loving,
Keep me loving till the break of day:

Give me love in my heart, keep me serving...
Give me love in my heart, I pray.
Give me love in my heart, keep me serving,
Keep me serving till the break of day.

Author unknown, adapted by A Servison and others.

Blessing

May the love of God be yours.
May the gentleness of Christ be yours.
May the peace of the Spirit be yours.
And may the Trinity bless you today and always.
Amen.

Rev Jane M Wilson
July 2025

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