

5th July 2026 – Morning Service

Megan Ashmore

Call to Worship

Jesus says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Welcome

Welcome to our service, set in the context of those verses. We have come to worship God this morning and so before we go any further, I invite you to lay before God all that is a burden to you this morning – anything that might be a distraction – so that you may focus on His love, forgiveness and grace and enjoy this time in His presence.

Prayer (written by Greta Stratford, local preacher in the Grantham Circuit)

The restless world commands our life with inharmonious noise and strife,
and we must draw apart,

to seek you in the solitude, to find the Spirit’s heavenly food,
the peace within our heart.

As Jesus went far off to pray, his cares before thy throne to lay,
O our Redeemer, King,
so we in solitude repair and rid our hearts of fret and care,
as all to thee we bring. **Amen.**

Almighty God, we give thanks for this space and time that enables us to rest in your presence. Having given to you the things that were troubling us, enable us to give our full attention to you that we may hear your voice and learn more of your will for us. **Amen.**

StF 25 – God is here!

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| 1) God is here! As we his people
Meet to offer praise and prayer,
May we find in fuller measure
What it is in Christ we share.
Here, as in the world around us,
All our varied skills and arts
Wait the coming of his Spirit
Into open minds and hearts. | 3) Here our children find a welcome
In the Shepherd's flock and fold;
Here as bread and wine are taken,
Christ sustains us, as of old;
Here the servants of the Servant
Seek in worship to explore
What it means in daily living
To believe and to adore. |
| 2) Here are symbols to remind us
Of our lifelong need of grace;
Here are table, font, and pulpit;
Here the cross has central place.
Here in honesty of preaching,
Here in silence, as in speech,
Here, in newness and renewal,
God the Spirit comes to each. | 4) Lord of all, of Church and Kingdom,
In an age of change and doubt,
Keep us faithful to the gospel,
Help us work your purpose out.
Here, in this day's dedication,
All we have to give, receive:
We, who cannot live without you,
We adore you! We believe! |

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Offertory Prayer

Heavenly Father, all we have to give, receive. We offer these gifts that in our giving and living, the work of the kingdom may be fulfilled in this place. **Amen.**

Prayers of Adoration and Thanks

Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him.

Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken. (Psalm 62)

Father, we love you and we praise you for your faithfulness, love and mercy. We marvel at the way creation reflects your grace – from the changing seasons, which offer growth and goodness, rest and renewal; to the changing weather which illustrates your power through the mighty winds and your delicate beauty in the frost patterns. Yet, Lord, you never change. You remain faithful, gracious and compassionate, understanding all our weaknesses. And knowing that we would turn from you, you sent your only Son to die on the cross that we might be forgiven and live with you in your kingdom forever.

Jesus, we love you and thank you for the love that bound you to the cross for our sins and our salvation. We do not deserve such a sacrifice for we continue to sin. We are sorry. But still you love us and willingly act as a high priest for us that we may be presented to God as pure and sinless. We can but bow our heads in awe and ask forgiveness through your holy name and seek to follow your ways in all we do and say and think.

Spirit, we love you and pray that you will fill us with your power. We struggle to live as we should, so often straying from the path that leads to eternal life. So, we seek your guidance and your strength and ask that we might be infused with your love and life, that we will walk closely with our Father in heaven.

God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, we are here in your presence. Accept our prayers.
Amen.

StF 443 – Come let us sing of a wonderful love

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| 1) Come, let us sing of a wonderful love,
Tender and true;
Out of the heart of the Father above,
Streaming to me and to you:
Wonderful love
Dwells in the heart of the Father above. | 3) Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;
Why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
Home, weary wanderer, home!
Wonderful love
Dwells in the heart of the Father above. |
| 2) Jesus, the Saviour, this gospel to tell,
Joyfully came;
Came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,
Sharing their sorrow and shame;
Seeking the lost,
Saving, redeeming at measureless cost. | 4) Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love,
Come and abide,
Lifting my life, till it rises above
Envy and falsehood and pride,
Seeking to be
Lowly and humble, a learner of thee. |

Robert Walmsley

Name that tune

Do you remember the TV show “Name that tune?” Originally hosted by Tom O’Connor, and then Lionel Blair, contestants were challenged to name a tune from a clue and from hearing the opening few notes. Each contestant could bid how many notes they would need to name the tune, using the famous format “I can name that tune in...”, then a number between 1 and 7.

Our gospel reading for today comes from the book of Matthew and is in two parts. We are going to hear the first few verses now.

Reading: Matthew 11: 16-19 (NIV)

‘To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the market-places and calling out to others:

“We played the pipe for you,
and you did not dance;

we sang a dirge,
and you did not mourn.”

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, “He has a demon.” The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, “Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.” But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.’

Reflection

Do you have a favourite genre of music? A couple of weeks ago the [Gentlemen Songsters](#) gave a concert at Kingswinford Methodist Church as part of our 60th anniversary celebrations. They shared a wide-ranging repertoire of songs from opera to pop; hymn tunes to songs from the musicals, alongside pieces traditionally associated with a male voice choir. We were also treated to a range of styles – solos, duets and barbershop singing. There seemed to be something for everyone.

But do you know what? I don’t think even that wonderful evening of music would have pleased the people that Jesus was talking about in the reading we heard. They are a strange few verses set in the context of John the Baptist’s imprisonment. John is languishing alone in a cell having upset Herod by speaking forthrightly about his marriage arrangements. Understandably, he is reflecting on past events and just wants to double check that Jesus is the Messiah John was proclaiming. So, he sends some of his disciples to question Jesus. Jesus sends back words of reassurance and then turns to the crowd.

“Remember John?” he says. “He’s the one who lived in the wilderness, ate locusts and wild honey, wore camel hair clothes, proclaimed repentance and baptised people in the river Jordan. You thought he was strange because he kept himself to himself and didn’t behave in the way you thought he should. Now, I’m here. The One he spoke about. I live amongst you, greet all the people I meet, enjoy all food and drink, and you say I’m strange because I don’t behave in the way you think I should. What do you want? You don’t know.”

Certain people in the crowd would never be satisfied because they didn’t want to be. They were content with the status quo. Both John and Jesus held up a magnifying glass for the people to examine their lives and gave them the opportunity to repent. But they didn’t want any inspection into their world which challenged them to turn from their familiar ways and realign themselves with God’s will. So, they just looked for excuses to deny that Jesus was the Messiah and became indifferent to the presence of God in their midst.

The lectionary for today actually misses out a chunk of verses which I think add insight to the passage we have heard.

Matthew 11: 20-24 (NIV)

Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. ‘Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.’

Jesus expresses the sorrow he has over Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum – three towns in Galilee, where it seems he has performed miracles. The people of these towns have rejected him too. Jesus cites the example of Tyre and Sidon and of Sodom, whose people, he suggests, **would** have repented in response to his work. The author and theologian Tom Wright puts it this way: “Jesus was offering a chance to embrace a different kingdom-vision. He’d outlined it in his great sermon and the teaching he was giving in towns and villages all over Galilee. He was living it out on the street, and in houses filled with laughter and

friendship. He was showing how powerful it was with his healings. And they didn't want it – and were ready to use any excuse to avoid the issue.”

The music was playing but the people were unmoved. They didn't want to respond because it intruded upon their comfortable lifestyles. But they also rejected it because they didn't recognise the melody. The Jewish people had a picture of what the Messiah would be like, and Jesus just didn't fit. They had expectations. But God has never done the expected thing. They should have remembered how He gave the aged Abraham and Sarah a child when they seemed to be past it, and chose them be the patriarch and matriarch of Israel – God's chosen people; how He used a reformed murderer, Moses, to rescue His people from the Egyptians; how He saw the potential in the young child Samuel; how He chose a young shepherd boy to become the greatest king of Israel. God was singing a newly composed tune, but it fell on deaf ears.

The music still plays... and many people still choose to sit out of the dance. How can we encourage people to respond to God's presence in the world?

“The proof is in the pudding” as they say, and Jesus knew that in time the truth would out. “Wisdom is proved right by her deeds” he said. And in time God's salvation plan was fulfilled through the death and resurrection of Christ. How blessed we are to know the truth and grace of that salvation plan: that Jesus is the truth by which we are brought into a right relationship with God; that by his grace we are redeemed

Let's do what we can to share the kingdom-vision with all those we meet. Let's demonstrate our faith in God by sharing our own stories of what He has done for us. Let's demonstrate God's love for all in the way we greet our neighbours. Let's demonstrate God's justice and compassion as we navigate our way through the mess and muck of this world. Let's demonstrate our reliance on God's grace as we walk and talk... and dance!!

StF 477 – Teach me to dance

*Ch) Teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart,
Teach me to move in the pow'r of Your Spirit.
Teach me to walk in the light of Your presence,
Teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart.
Teach me to love with Your heart of compassion
Teach me to trust in the word of Your promise
Teach me to hope in the day of Your coming
Teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart.*

2) Let all my movements express
A heart that loves to say 'Yes',
A will that leaps to obey You.
Let all my energy blaze
To see the joy in Your face
Let my whole being praise You, praise You.

1) You wrote the rhythm of life,
Created heaven and earth;
In You is joy without measure.
So like a child in Your sight,
I dance to see Your delight
For I was made for Your pleasure, pleasure.

Graham Kendrick © 1993 Make Way Music

Reading: Matthew 11: 25-30 (NIV)

At that time Jesus said, 'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

'All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

‘Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.’

Reflection

As part of my job teaching music in a Primary school, I have a session with the preschool children – tiny tots aged two. At the end of the session, we sing “In the basket they go” as the children are encouraged to tidy up and put the instruments back into my wicker basket. Inevitably when everything is in the basket one little girl attempts to pick it for me. It is far too heavy for her, and I try to explain this every week, but she is determined that one day she will manage to lift it from the ground.

In this passage we heard Jesus say, “Take my yoke upon you... For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Until now, I’ve always imagined the yoke being referred to was a milkmaid’s yoke – the one she would wear across her shoulders to carry two heavy buckets of milk. But the commentaries I’ve read suggest that Jesus was thinking of a yoke that would be harnessed to an ox. This sort of yoke would be more of a guide than a weight bearer. In the context of our reading, both have their place. The people are making excuses for ignoring Jesus; but Jesus has his response ready.

They did not understand the way of Jesus – it was not what they were expecting. They had visions of a Messiah being kingly, full of power, righting the world with force and rebellion. And indeed, Jesus was, and did, all those things, but by becoming a servant king, using the power of love to reconcile the created world with its loving father. As they resisted, Jesus invited them to be linked to him as an ox with its master. The master can guide and lead and train. Jesus would guide and lead and train them in the way of God. And as Jesus and the people moved together as one so they might come to know each other better and develop a relationship.

And just to be clear, Jesus paved the way for anything else that might prove to be a barrier to knowing him – worry; grief; busyness; tiredness. He offered to share the load with them by placing his yoke upon them – a yoke well made to fit easily and comfortably. Yes, Jesus was bringing in a new way of doing things and yes, it all seemed a little unusual and challenging, but Jesus was there to help them.

So it is today. The church of the 21st Century looks somewhat different to the early church, and even to the church of the 20th Century. But as we move forward and adapt to new ways of worship and engaging with a fast moving society, Jesus stands alongside us. Let’s not be indifferent to the work of the kingdom, which reaches out in innovative ways to touch the world. But let’s yoke ourselves to Jesus and allow his love, his grace, his compassion, his comfort be ours as we say yes to helping proclaim the good news.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we give thanks that by your grace you have called us to be in relationship with you through Jesus, your son, our Saviour, and that through the gift of the Spirit we can say “yes.” May we not condemn those who have not followed your way. But guide us as we seek to share the good news of your love and live out the kingdom values that others will come to know you too. **Amen.**

StF 511 – Speak in the stillness

- 1) Speak in the stillness, God we pray,
Come to our hearts and meet us here.
Bring us your peace for each new day
- the gift of grace to earth from heaven.
- 2) We speak as though we have not heard
And live as if we do not know
Your love in Christ, the living Word
- the gift of grace to earth from heaven.
- 3) When, in the anxious rush of days,
We lose our hold on faith and you,
Reclaim us with your calm embrace
- the gift of grace to earth from heaven.
- 4) Lift us to see with heaven's eyes.
We long to soar on eagles' wings
As we press on to claim your prize
- the gift of grace to earth from heaven.

5) So may we be renewed in love,
Held and sustained by you alone.
Strengthened by you that we may prove
A gift of grace to earth from heaven.

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Prayers of Intercession

Almighty God, we ask that you help us and our Christian family around the world to move in the power of your Spirit: that your kingdom values of love, joy, peace, justice and hope reign in our lives and be shared through your Spirit working in us. We pray for world leaders, politicians, local councillors, community leaders and all those in positions of authority that they might listen to your voice. Give them courage to speak up for what is right and the boldness to change tactic for the good of the people they represent.

Teach us to dance to the beat of your heart.

We ask that you help us and our Christian family around the world to walk in the light of your presence: that through our words and actions others will come to know you and seek to learn more of you. We pray for the Christian community throughout the world; for the Methodist church – the work of the Connexion; our District and Circuit; and our local church. May we be a beacon of light as we worship you.

Teach us to dance to the beat of your heart.

We ask that you help us and our Christian family around the world to love with your heart of compassion: that we will recognise you in everyone we meet and respond to their needs, attitudes and actions with care, tolerance and respect. We pray for charities who work in your name to bring your creation to fulfilment – that everything might live as you desire and flourish under your care.

Teach us to dance to the beat of your heart.

We ask that you help us and our Christian family around the world to trust in the word of your promise: that our eyes will always be fixed on you and your word would always dwell in our hearts. We pray for the people and places today that need to hear your word of comfort, assurance, hope and healing. We especially remember those known to us...

Teach us to dance to the beat of your heart.

We ask that you help us and our Christian family around the world to hope in the day of your coming: that our faith in you will be a support as we navigate our way through these earthly days and the mess and muck of life. We pray for all who share the good news of the gospel throughout the world bringing hope to the dark places.

Teach us to dance to the beat of your heart. 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.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

StF 73 – Fill thou my life

- 1) Fill thou my life, O Lord my God,
In every part with praise,
That my whole being may proclaim
Thy being and thy ways.
- 2) Not for the lip of praise alone
Nor e'en the praising heart
I ask, but for a life made up
Of praise in every part:
- 3) Praise in the common things of life,
Its goings out and in;
Praise in each duty and each deed,
However small and mean.
- 4) Fill every part of me with praise;
Let all my being speak
Of thee and of thy love, O Lord,
Poor though I be and weak.
- 5) So shalt thou, gracious Lord, from me
Receive the glory due;
And so shall I begin on earth
The song for ever new.
- 6) So shall no part of day or night
From sacredness be free;
But all my life, in every step,
Be fellowship with thee.

Horatius N Bonar

Blessing

Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me." May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. **Amen.**