

**Sheffield United Reformed Churches**  
**Team Ministry worship for individuals or families**  
**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2020 at 10:30 am.**

**15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**

**Call to Worship**

Seek the kingdom of God and all that he requires. And everything you need will come to hand.  
Ask for all you need. Look for all you must do. Open the door that is before you...

**Hymn R&S 512**

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness;  
And all these things shall be added unto you.  
Hallelu, Hallelujah!

Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and you shall find.  
Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.  
Hallelu, Hallelujah!

We shall not live by bread alone, but by every word  
That proceeds out from the mouth of God.  
Hallelu, Hallelujah!

**Prayers of Worship, Confession and Thanksgiving**

Lord, we come to you today, reassured that in your great love and compassion, you will receive and welcome each one of us.

We worship and praise you for the deep, yearning love and concern whereby you hold each one of us.

Created in your image, each one of us bears the marks of your careful craftsmanship.

Redeemed by your sacrifice on the cross, each one of us is sealed with the value of your infinite love.

Filled with your Holy Spirit, each one of us carries your compassion and concern for your creation into the world.

We are sorry that, in our selfish and thoughtless living, we contribute to your creation's rebellion against your loving and holy ways - and so, there is much in this world that blinds, corrupts and causes us to fear.

But we also catch glimpses of light and goodness and we hear words of encouragement that run counter to this narrative of despair - we encounter your wonder in the beauty of creation, music and art and in answered prayer. We experience your provision in the abundance of gifts that we enjoy; our food and clothing, our homes. Above all we find, your love in the lives of those we love and who love and support us. You speak to us of goodness in the heavens above us, in the people alongside us, in the Scriptures before us and in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ made real in our lives - and so we have hope.

So you call us to live positively and courageously, as lights in the darkness of lies, as salt, bringing savour to a decaying world, as cities that provide sanctuary and strength to the lives of others.

So, as we come to you to worship and to listen, we commit ourselves once more to serve and proclaim the light, life and love of Christ. These things we pray, worshipping and thanking you, Father Son and Holy Spirit.



### Readings

**Isaiah 12** - Praise to God for grace and salvation!

### **John 15 vv 16-27**

Jesus appoints us to go and bear fruit - but the world will hate us and persecute us for it, just as He was persecuted...

### **Reflection (on John 17 v14) by Rev. Peter Heckels - "They do not belong to the world..."**

I believe that Jesus calls us to be in the world, but not of the world. We are called to be different, to change and be more like Jesus, obedient to God and his ways rather than following the ways and standards of this world. Is this easy? Of course not.

Firstly, we will find it impossible to be like Jesus and will constantly fall as we try to follow his way, but thankfully Jesus is there to pick us up and set us on our way once more. Where would we be without Grace?

Secondly as Jesus reminds us, the world will hate us as it hated him, for the world so full of evil cannot cope with the love of God when it is there in the midst of all that is going on. Yet says Jesus he "chose you from this world, and you do not belong to it." (John 15 v19). So again, how do we cope, only through Jesus promise that he will send the Holy Spirit our Helper (John 15 v26).

We are called to be 'Salt for all mankind' (Matthew 5 v13); 'Light to the world' and 'a city on a hill' (Matthew 5 v14).

Both these tasks take place in the world where we are God's agents for his purpose, yeast making the bread rise (Matthew 13 v33). These are the tasks of disciples of Jesus, entrusted to you and me, the church of Christ.

There is much talk about a 'new normal', but should the church not be going back to its age old commission to bring the Gospel, the Good news of Jesus to a world in desperate need of love and forgiveness. Of course, we need to explore new ways of sharing this message, or we could always go back to the old ways which if we are honest are not really working.

The truth is we have a new opportunity as so many people are re-evaluating their lives by offering them the real hope found in Jesus. We can offer the reality that everyone no matter what race, colour, sex, age is valued by God, that everyone can receive his grace and have the promise of life in all its fulness both here on earth and into eternity, once they accept what God has done for them in Jesus. Our 'new normal' needs to see all of us taking our responsibilities for sharing this Good News. Not all of us are called to be preachers, teachers, evangelists, or apostles, but we are all called to be disciples, witnesses to Jesus and his impact on our lives.

So, what are we to do? We can all get on our knees and take this fight to the world.

We can pray for our leaders, both church and state, instead of constantly criticise as the world seems to. We can pray for family, those in real need during these times, the sick, the bereaved, the isolated, those anxious about job security and the necessary means to support their families.

We can pray for all who feel wounded, weary, and broken that God will have mercy, bring healing and peace. We can pray that as we struggle and juggle a new way of living that the Holy Spirit will stir a hunger in our nation that only Jesus can fill. We can pray that our churches will be given new imagination and creativity to proclaim the Good News of Jesus in word and deed, and that the Holy Spirit will direct our future to be the church Jesus wants. We can pray for our ministers to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and offer ourselves as disciples to serve here and now.

Then we can pray that we may have the courage simply to let God do his work.

So, let us go in faith to be a boat on the waters of this world sailing wherever God leads. But remember the boat is on the water, but if the water gets into the boat the boat will surely sink. 'You are in the world not of it'

### **Hymn**

O Lord, the clouds are gathering, the fire of judgement burns; how we have fallen!  
O Lord, you stand appalled to see your laws of love so scorned and lives so broken

*Refrain:*

*Have mercy, Lord; forgive us, Lord. Restore us, Lord, revive your church again!  
Let justice flow like rivers, and righteousness like a never failing stream*

O Lord, over the nations now where is the dove of peace? Her wings are broken...  
O Lord, while precious children starve the tools of war increase; their bread is stolen...

*Have mercy, Lord...*

O Lord, dark powers are poised to flood our streets with hate and fear; we must awaken!  
O Lord, let love reclaim the lives that sin would sweep away and let your kingdom come!

*Have mercy, Lord...*

Yet, O Lord, your glorious cross shall tower triumphant in this land, evil confounding  
Through the fire, your suffering church display the glories of her Christ; praises resounding!

*Have mercy, Lord...*

### **Prayers of Intercession**

So help us Lord, to live positively and courageously as lights in the darkness of lies:  
As we are overwhelmed by wars of words in our politics and civic life, help us to fight lies with the truth that is in Jesus: to combat greed with generosity, fear with trust and division with unity. May we tackle the great issues of our time with understanding, compassion, respect and ears that listen. Lift us above tribalism of race, nation and party to welcome the good in one another and to seek the truth that bears a human face in Christ. Help us realise and live out the pattern you have given your people in which our differences are transcended and our unique characteristics celebrated

Help us Lord, to live positively and courageously as salt, bringing savour to a decaying world:  
We pray for our leaders in both church and state who struggle, daily with overwhelming problems of the pandemic, of the challenge of climate change, overpopulation and food shortages, of violence, division and lawlessness. We pray that your Church will be given new imagination and creativity to proclaim the Good News of Jesus in word and deed, and that the Holy Spirit will direct our future to be the people Jesus wants. We pray for our ministers, elders and members will be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and that we will all offer ourselves as disciples to serve wherever we live our daily lives.

Help us Lord, to live positively and courageously, as a city on a hill that provides sanctuary and strength to the lives of others:

So we pray for those in real need during these times, the sick, the bereaved, the isolated, those anxious about job security and the necessary means to support their families. We pray for all who feel wounded, weary, and broken that God will have mercy, bring healing and peace. We hold in your care all who are on our minds in particular ... *(name special names here...)*. We pray that as we struggle towards a new way of living that the Holy Spirit will stir a hunger in our nation for truth, justice and righteousness. Above all, we pray that we may have the courage simply to let you do your work so that hunger may be satisfied by the coming of Jesus into our hearts and homes, our streets and our cities.

So, let us, the Church, a boat on the waters of this world, sail wherever you lead and may your Kingdom come in our lives as we say together the prayer that you taught us... **Our Father...**

### **Hymn**

We've a story to tell to the nations, that shall turn their hearts to the right,  
a story of truth and mercy, a story of peace and light, a story of peace and light.

*Refrain:*

*For the darkness shall turn to dawning, and the dawning to noonday bright,  
and Christ's great kingdom shall come on earth, the kingdom of love and light.*

We've a song to be sung to the nations, that shall lift their hearts to the Lord,  
a song that shall conquer evil, and shatter the spear and sword,  
and shatter the spear and sword.

*For the darkness...*

We've a message to give to the nations, that the Lord who reigneth above  
has sent us His Son to save us, and show us that God is love,  
and show us that God is love.

*For the darkness...*

We've a Saviour to show to the nations, who the path of sorrow has trod,  
that all of the world's great peoples may come to the truth of God,  
may come to the truth of God!

*For the darkness...*

### **Blessing**

Shine a Light of the Father's love...  
Speak the Salt of the Saviour's word...  
Stand like a City in the Spirit's strength...  
And may God, Father Son and Holy Spirit bless you  
To comfort, encourage and strengthen others