

**Sheffield United Reformed Churches**  
**Team Ministry worship for individuals or families on**  
**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2021 at 10:30 am**

**Welcome/Call to Worship**

Merciful God

We come together to worship longing for tenderness because this world can be hard.

We come longing for light because our lives are crowded with shadows.

We come desperately needing direction.

Fill us today with your peace: Your Spirit is our peace and our path. Amen

**Hymn**

I will sing the wondrous story of the Christ who died for me.

How He left His home in glory for the cross of Calvary.

I was lost, but Jesus found me, found the sheep that went astray,

Threw His loving arms around me, drew me back into His way.

I was bruised, but Jesus healed me; faint was I from many a fall;

Sight was gone, and fears possessed me, but He freed me from them all.

Days of darkness still come o'er me, sorrow's paths I often tread,

But the Savior still is with me; by His hand I'm safely led.

**Prayer of Worship**

As we stand in awe of your goodness and mercy today, we ask you to be present amongst us by the power of your Holy Spirit.

Father, we declare that we love you.

Thank you that you have made the way of love known through your son Jesus Christ.

We pray that you would reveal this great love to us all today as we come to worship.

Lead us by your Spirit to praise you.

May our hearts overflow with thanksgiving and our mouths proclaim your everlasting greatness.

In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

**Readings**



**Isaiah 40, 21-31** - God gives strength to the weary

**Psalms 147, 1-11** - The Lord builds up the city AND he heals the broken-hearted

**Mark 1, 29-39** - Jesus heals a community AND all the sick people there

**1 Corinthians 9, 16-23** - Paul does all he can to communicate the Good News of Jesus

**Reflection**

I'm always slightly amused by the story of Jesus staying at Peter's house on the afternoon of the first day of his ministry and healing Peter's mother-in-law - she immediately got up and started fussing around "her boys" and their new mates. Is it because the only reason Peter might want to do his mother-in-law a favour was so that she could at least bring him a cup of tea? It reminds me of Les Dawson and similar old-style British comedians "mother-in-law" jokes for some reason!! (nb did anyone realise that, while with us, Les Dawson was a very committed friend of the URC? Yes, really!!)

We can still see what is reputed to be the remains of Peter's house in Capernaum, in Galilee, and a very fine and extensive structure it was. When the whole town turned up later for a healing meeting there was plenty of room. We know Peter and Andrew employed hired men in their boats and so were probably reasonably successful businessmen - the Eddie Stobart's of their day (Eddie Stobart being another well-known modern Christian! Yes, really!)

But there is a serious point to the story, firstly, in that Jesus lived in such close communion with his Heavenly Father that he was able to channel God's healing power. Having healed a mentally disturbed man in the morning and Peter's mum-in-law in the afternoon, word soon spread so that the whole town came seeking him. Secondly, in that the healing that the woman experienced led, not to smug comfort but was turned around in loving and unstinting service. Healing, like any gift of God, is not an end in itself (although a huge personal blessing) but has a more far-reaching purpose, to strengthen us to serve others.

This theme re-echoes on the story as Jesus, having poured out his strength and life in service to a whole town, will not let that community keep him tied up as their own personal spiritual power house. Everyone was looking for him! And, let us note in passing that all who came for healing received it. I wonder who were first in the queue and whether there were arguments about priority groups? But Jesus had enough time, grace and power for all.

Having recharged his spiritual batteries by seeking his Father afresh in prayer, Jesus encourages his disciples to join him in spreading the blessings around ("Let's go..."). He does not let short-term and spectacular success blind him to his wider purpose: "That is why I have come" (Mark 1, 38).

Peter's house, in Scripture, is a symbol of the Church (Peter later being designated the rock on which that community would be built). Jesus, through his resurrection, continues to be *Immanuel*, God living with us and in His people, the Church. And the resurrection power of God that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that is at work in us (Ephesians 1, 19-20). God is here in Christ to meet every need we might have. So let us let him into our "earthly homes" (both of bodily flesh and bricks and mortar) to allow healing to begin in Peter's house!

But let it not remain there. Listening to the direction of God (which means setting aside time to pray as Jesus had to), let us be ready to share it further afield as we go in the new directions of mission that Christ is calling us by his Spirit.

Let us notice that Jesus' presence healed a whole community in Capernaum that evening. And the healing came to each individual as much as they needed it. The Covid crisis has exposed many ills in ourselves as individuals. Our death and illness rate has been exacerbated by vulnerability because of high rates of personal ill-health as well as many of us failing to take responsible precautions, overridden by a selfish sense of personal entitlement or idiotic conspiracy theories. But it has exposed deeper ills in our social and political fabric too: inequalities, poverty, opportunism and division. Are we willing to "lend" our homes (both of bodily flesh and bricks and mortar) to Christ?

Our nation and our communities need, desperately, the healing balm of God in Jesus. God is able to help us individually and deal with the great political and social problems that face our nation. He is able to "build up Jerusalem AND bind up the broken hearted" (Psalm 147, 2-3). As in Capernaum, in so far as each individual will find mental well-being, physical recovery and spiritual restoration, so communities, our city and our nation will find the same. They are both intertwined. Healing will begin in Peter's House, the Church but, by Jesus' gracious call and gentle challenge, we, like wounded healers, must take it and share it further afield.

Even Jesus, young man that he was, needed to seek his Father in prayer to renew his strength and refocus his direction. So as we "wait on the Lord" may we rise on eagle's wings and find strength to take the new paths in which he leads us.

## **Hymn (R&S 644)**

At evening when the sun was set, the sick, O Lord, around thee lay;  
O in what divers pains they met! O with what joy they went away!

O Saviour Christ, our woes dispel; for some are sick, and some are sad,  
and some have never loved thee well, and some have lost the love they had;

And some are pressed with worldly care and some are tried with fear and doubt  
And some such grievous passions tear that only you can cast them out

O Christ, our Saviour, Son of Man, thou hast been troubled, tempted, tried;  
thy kind but searching glance can scan the very wounds that shame would hide.

Thy touch has still its ancient power; no word from thee can fruitless fall:  
Hear, in this solemn holy hour, and in thy mercy heal us all.

## **Communion**

Lord, we invite you into our homes. We invite you into our lives...

As we eat this bread and drink this wine, we invite your very own life of wholeness to dwell within us, body and soul, mind and spirit

But, even as we invite you, we realise, through your generous grace, that you are inviting us  
To find peace, to find rest, to find strength - To find the life of your kingdom

And so, as we hear your loving call so we find healing and wholeness...

So we eat this bread, remembering that you surrendered your body in loving service for each of us... *(we take bread and eat)*

So we drink this wine, remembering that you poured out your blood for the sake of the whole world... *(we take wine and drink)*

And now, having received your life, we give our lives to serve Your Kingdom as we pray for your world...

## **Prayer of Intercession**

Lord, we are the people of Capernaum...

Opening our hearts to the new reality in our midst: Your presence in Jesus...

The world, bearing down upon us, is shouting at us that the sun is setting, fading from our lives  
But we press around your door of welcome - The door of Peter's house that, by your grace you have left ajar, for those like us, who are in need...

We know that the folk who rub our shoulders may have needs that are greater still than ours and so we bring them: those grieving, approaching their life's end, those who are ill or in hospital, those lonely, sad, depressed, those facing hardship and intolerable burdens of care...  
*(we name our loved one before God here...)*

We worship You, the everlasting and eternal God who never tires or grows weary  
Lord of eternity, as in that stretched-out evening, you still give time to consider and to cover each one's ills - and dispatch them to the overpowering darkness  
And render their voice of fear, anxiety and oppression silent in our hearts

We rise to leave this place to serve you - and we realise that the house where we found healing is not yours but lent to you for an eternal evening by Peter, the foundation of your Church  
To him you have entrusted keys of power to open or lock doors against our pain.

And so, as we go out to serve you in your world, may we give you all that is rightfully yours - the "houses" that are our earthly bodies, our souls, spirits, our thoughts and words: that, through our service, freely given, gates of mercy might swing wide for the world

Holy God, you gather the whole universe into your radiant presence and continually reveal your Son as our Savior.

Bring healing to all wounds, make whole all that is broken, all places where there is conflict, poverty, injustice and hatred. Speak truth to all illusion, and shed light in every darkness, that all creation will see your glory and know your Christ. Amen

And so we pray for your kingdom in the words that Jesus taught us...

### **Lord's Prayer (a Modern Version)**

Oh Thou, from whom the breath of life comes,  
Who fills all realms of sound, light and vibration.  
May Your light be experienced in our utmost souls.  
Your Heavenly Domain approaches. Let Your will come true.  
Give us wisdom for our daily need.  
Detach the fetters of faults that bind us.  
Let us not be lost in superficial things,  
But let us be freed from that which keeps us from our true purpose.  
From You comes the all-working will, the lively strength to act,  
The song that beautifies all and renews itself from age to age.  
Sealed in trust, faith and truth, we confirm with our entire beings.

### **Hymn (R&S 492)**

Dear Lord and Father of us all, forgive our foolish ways!  
Re-clothe us in our rightful mind; in purer lives Thy service find  
In deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard, beside the Syrian Sea,  
The gracious calling of the Lord, let us, like them, without a word  
Rise up and follow Thee.

Drop Thy still dews of quietness, till all our strivings cease;  
Take from our souls the strain and stress, and let our ordered lives confess  
The beauty of Thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire Thy coolness and Thy balm;  
Let sense be dumb, let flesh re-tire; Speak through the earth-quake, wind, and fire,  
O still small voice of calm

### **Blessing**

O God, Who spoke your word in creation - bless us  
Who revealed your good news in Jesus Christ - bless us  
Who leads us forward by the Holy Spirit - bless us

Fill all creation with that word again,  
So that by proclaiming your joyful promises to all nations  
And singing of your glorious hope to all peoples,  
We may become one living body,  
Your incarnate presence on the earth. Amen

And so may the blessing of Father, Son and Holy Spirit be ours!