

**Sheffield United Reformed Churches**  
**Team Ministry worship for individuals or a family**  
**Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021 at 10:30 am.**

**Call to worship**

It is so good to be together, God, on these screens, with these people,  
Together, listening for your voice, united by your Spirit.  
In this time of worship tell us about your kingdom of justice so that we can seek it.  
Show us your love and mercy.  
We want to walk with you, humbly, closely, daily. Amen.

**Hymn R&S 274**

God is love: his the care, tending each, ev'rywhere,  
God is love, all is there! Jesus came to show him, that we all might know him!

Refrain:

*Sing aloud, loud, loud! Sing aloud, loud, loud!*  
*God is good! God is truth! God is beauty! Praise him!*

None can see God above; we can share life and love;  
thus may we Godward move, finding him in creation, holding ev'ry nation.

*Sing aloud, loud, loud!*

Jesus lived on the earth, hope and life brought to birth  
and affirmed human worth, for he came to save us by the truth he gave us.

*Sing aloud, loud, loud!*

To our Lord praise we sing, light and life, friend and King,  
coming down, love to bring, pattern for our duty, showing God in beauty.

*Sing aloud, loud, loud!*

**Opening Prayer**

O God, we come before you this morning. With all that we are. With all that we can be.  
We come before you, imploring you to be with us and within us in our journeying,  
gently guiding us along right paths.

Open our hearts and minds, so we can recognise and acknowledge  
the beauty of creation, the joy of community, the kindness of a stranger  
and offer you our deepest thanks and praise.

Merciful God, forgive us when we take the path of apathy and indifference  
when we take the path of greed and hoarding  
when we take the path of hate and judgement.  
Help us to know that each and every time we can be forgiven  
Living God, who fed a crowd physically and spiritually,  
feed us this day and every day, so we are open and ready  
to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with our God.  
Amen.

## Readings:



**2 Samuel 11:26 - 12:13** - David commits adultery

**Psalm 51:1-12** - David prays and repents

**Ephesians 4:1-16** - Unity and maturity in Christ's Body

**John 6:24-35** - Jesus, The bread of Heaven

## Hymn

Listen to the word which God has spoken  
Listen to the word that God has spoken,  
listen to the One who is close at hand,  
listen to the voice which began creation,  
listen even if you don't understand.

## Reflection

Altering the football song a little, this reflection could be called, 'You Should never Walk Alone.'

One of my delights as a small child was playing with my mother's button box. She had a big and widely assorted collection culled by her mother and herself. I used to pick out various types and classify them by size by type by colour. It was a fun exercise for me but part of the education we all need to sort things into categories and find different purposes for each type. We learn to do this kind of sorting with tasks with people and with situations. For example, we learn how to know the difference between the way we speak to those in authority and our peers. We divide the events of our time into sections and as Proverbs tells us, 'There is a time for...'

Because of this training we tend to classify and divide up our spiritual life and make time with God separate from time for ourselves. At the simplest level God is for prayer time and on Sunday morning. I want to agree with one of our top Olympic athletes, Christine Ohuragu who said, 'For me my faith is a 24/7 matter. It's not something you switch on and off for Sunday. You have to accept who you are in Christ rather than what other people want you to be. Worship services for me are the place to get spiritual fuel and to re-focus for living with God every day.'

The people who had eaten their fill in the gospel reading understood hunger and lived hand to mouth lives so to think more of food for the spirit rather than for the body must have been extra difficult, but this was what we all have to do. Seeing the hand of God in our food is not the way we are trained to think yet this is the message coming from the words of Jesus. Of course, we know the creator God made the animals and plants that make up the resources we need to feed us. But eating is not something we think of as, 'spiritual.' The practice of saying grace before meals acknowledged the link, but it is not often said today.

There are two people from scripture whose words I have been thinking of., Micah, who said, 'What does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.' Or Paul who opens chapter 4 of his letter to the Ephesians with, 'I beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called with all humility and gentleness. With patience bearing one another up in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'

Thinking of Micah first, I find the image of walking conscious of God beside is helpful... he is there but it is very easy to ignore his presence excluding him and concentrating on our body without reference to the Spirit... to God. I have known very sanctimonious people who preface every word they say with a reference to God as if they are mere puppets for God to manage.

Giving thought to God the creator who has provided every item we eat makes a great difference; the food is more appreciated and our hearts find thankfulness welling up within us and we may even remember those who will go hungry today. Walking with God takes us along our life's journey day by day. He is there when we meet the neighbour who has been difficult, there as we work with people who expect leadership from us and need our help.

In whatever situation we find ourselves in, it makes a new pattern to our relations with others as we consider how we are treated by God... loved and forgiven over and over again, sent a Saviour who died for us. How then, with God there beside us can we be less than loving to one who is also a loved child of his. Knowing that he is there keeps the communication line open. We don't need to ask him to do everything for us as I described earlier. Micah talks of walking humbly with God not on a lead like a pet animal

This thought leads directly to Paul's words which end, 'making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Paul was probably thinking of Christians together in a community, but I feel it can be seen as a reminder for the individual's relationship with God as well as the community aspect. God has a vast plan for his world and each of us has a small part to play in it which is damaged and not fulfilled when Christians break the bond of peace between each other or when they spend most of their time excluding God because they are too busy with their own plans and so forgetting his plan.

Those people who were part of the great feeding were struggling to understand how to live daily lives with all its ups and downs and at the same time, perform the works of God as they asked. Jesus answered the disciples that they must believe and the same goes for us. Believing means living, knowing that God walks beside us as he has promised he will be, and is said so often at the end of a service, 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit remain with to the end of the age.

To conclude; live; knowing God is beside us and learning to keep the everyday part of our faith so he is never excluded from our plans then he can use our plans as part of his plan to make earth ready to be united with heaven.

Brother Lawrence in 13<sup>th</sup> Century put it very well when he said, 'I often feel closer to God amid the clatter of the pots and pans in the kitchen than I do before the high altar.' Amen

### **Music for reflection**

We walk by faith, and not by sight: no gracious words we hear  
Of him who spoke as none e'er spoke, but we believe him near.

We may not touch his hands and side, nor follow where he trod;  
Yet in his promise we rejoice, and cry "My Lord and God!"

Help then, O Lord, our unbelief, and may our faith abound;  
To call on you when you are near, and seek where you are found:

That when our life of faith is done in realms of clearer light  
We may behold you as you are in full and endless sight.

We walk by faith, and not by sight: no gracious words we hear  
Of him who spoke as none e'er spoke, but we believe him near.

### **Communion**

Jesus said: I am the bread of life. The table is open to all. Come let us share with one another in community.

Loving God, through your goodness we have this bread and wine to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made. May we know your presence in the sharing of this bread, so that we may know your touch in our lives.

We celebrate the life that Jesus has shared among his community through the years, and shares with us now. Made one in Christ and one with each other we offer you these gifts and with them ourselves as a living sacrifice to do your work in the world

## **Prayers of Intercession**

God of all creation, hear our prayers this morning, as we look around this world which you have created and given to us to care for and about.

We lift up to you all those who have been affected by the devastating effects of climate change: from the deadly flooding in Germany and Belgium as well as China to water shortages in Iran and extreme heat in large portions of the western United States of America.

We remember people and places experiencing violence and conflict – in Israel/Palestine, in Brazil, in Haiti and in their homes.

We pray in recognition of the ongoing threat of Covid-19 and the spread of the latest Delta variant. We highlight the places where fewer than 2% of the people are vaccinated: Senegal, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and South Africa.

Comforting God, walk with each and every one of us when we experience grief, confusion and pain, and in your graciousness, bring hope, consolation and renewal for your whole world: people and planet.

Amen.

## **Hymn R&S 549**

One more step along the world I go,  
One more step along the world I go;  
From the old things to the new,  
Keep me travelling along with you

Refrain:

*And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
Keep me traveling along with you.*

Round the corners of the world I turn,  
More and more about the world I learn;  
And the new things that I see  
You'll be looking at along with me. *And it's from the old...*

As I travel through the bad and good,  
Keep me traveling the way I should;  
Where I see no way to go you'll be telling me the way, I know. *And it's from the old...*

Give me courage when the world is rough,  
Keep me loving though the world is tough;  
Leap and sing in all I do, keep me traveling along with you. *And it's from the old...*

You are older than the world can be,  
You are younger than the life in me;  
Ever old and ever new, keep me traveling along with you. *And it's from the old...*

## **Blessing**

May God walk above us to watch over us  
May Jesus walk beside us to comfort us  
May the Holy Spirit walk before us to show us the way.  
And may the blessing of our Almighty  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
Be with us now and evermore.  
Amen.