

Haverhill Methodist Church – Worship at Home  
Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Welcome Message – Revd. Peter Goodhall

“Once you have been to the cross, you will never be the same.”  
So said Billy Graham. In our worship at home or in church we gather as a family around the cross of Jesus. May we be changed by the power of love and grace we find at the cross of Christ.

Opening Prayer

Father God,  
Your extravagant love has called us together.  
Long before we even knew you, you already knew us, and had chosen us to be part of your own family— sisters and brothers with our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.  
Even when we are separated from one another, we are united in you. What amazing love you have shown toward us.  
And so we come before you with praise and thanksgiving, offering You the worship of our hearts and lives, and opening ourselves to the prompting and leading of your Holy Spirit.  
Receive our worship—our praise and prayers and offerings— through the intercession of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. May the time we spend here in your presence bring honour and glory to your name. **Amen.**

Hymn/song

Bible Reading

Ephesians Chapter 1 verses 3-14

Prayer of Confession

Gracious and compassionate God, we need you more than ever. In our pain, our sinfulness, our loneliness, our sadness and our happiness, we need your presence, your compassion, your grace, your comfort, your renewal, your healing, your peace, your joy, your love and your salvation. Lord we are reminded that all this and more is embodied in your son Jesus - in his life, his death on the cross and his resurrection.

All this was freely given that we may have abundant life, eternal life, fullness of life, freed lives, loved lives, loving lives grace-giving lives. Come Lord Jesus, pour your lavish mercy, grace and love and salvation over us today. Set us free from our sins to love and serve you as your witnesses. For the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn/song

### Sermon

On the eve of his crucifixion, Jesus gathered together his disciples in the upper room to share a meal. In Luke 22:15 Jesus said to them "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer".

Today, some of us are able to gather in church at the Lord's Table to receive bread and wine for the first time in a long time. For this we are thankful.

Others worshipping at home today must wait in hope. We miss you today.

We all echo the eager desire of Jesus to share in this sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

But whether we are worshipping at home or in church, in this moment as one church family we gather at the foot of the cross of Jesus. It is a journey we make in our hearts.

Here we find our communion with Christ.

In my message today I want to remind you of the message of the cross and the good news it brings.

At the cross we see our sin, our sufferings and our salvation.

Let us now briefly consider each in turn.

Firstly, at the cross we remember our **SIN**.

It was human sin that put Jesus on the cross.

Selfish, cruel men serving a cruel Roman regime or a cruel religious code had Jesus crucified.

Sin is a word with 'i' in the middle.

'I' speaks of my selfish will, having my own way, rejecting any need for God.

So in a wider sense we can each say 'I am guilty' and 'Jesus died for my sins'.

A church notice sheet once had a typing error, announcing the hymn 'O for a thousand tongues to sin'.

Through our careless words, our unkind thoughts and our selfish actions, we have all sinned.

We bring to the foot of the cross today our own need for forgiveness, our betrayals, our burden of sin and guilt, our denials. We bring to the foot of the cross the sins of the world; amplified into organizations and systems, corporations and governments, injustice and racism.

Jesus died for the sins of the world and all because of his wonderful love. He surrendered his life.

Jesus died to pay a debt he didn't owe because we owed a debt we couldn't pay.

It has been said it was not just the nails that held Jesus on the cross, but his great love.

So bring your burden of sin to the foot of the cross today.

Picture John Bunyan's pilgrim, the man with a burden strapped to his back, the burden of sin, the burden of guilt, he staggered up the hill of Calvary, marvelled at the cross and his eyes welled up with tears of gratitude to the dying Saviour. 'Blest be the cross – he began to say and added - blest rather be the man who suffered there for me'. The cords binding the burden to the man's back suddenly snapped, the load went bounding down the hill and rolled into an empty tomb. And he never saw it again.

Let us picture our sins being rolled into the tomb today.

At the cross we see our sin, and secondly we see our

### **SUFFERINGS.**

The cross reminds us of the power of death.

Coronavirus has reminded us all of the power of death.

Many are still suffering. The church is still suffering.

At the cross we see that God suffers with us and for us.

On the cross God through Jesus bears our sufferings and the sufferings of the whole world for all time.

In Simpson & Stainer's hymn 'Cross of Jesus' we find these words about this 'Divine Humiliation':

*O mysterious condescending!*

*O abandonment sublime!*

*Very God Himself is bearing*

*All the sufferings of time!*

*Evermore for human failure  
By His passion we can plead;  
God has born all mortal anguish,  
Surely He will know our need.*

*This—all human thought surpassing—  
This is earth's most awful hour,  
God has taken mortal weakness!  
God has laid aside His power!*

So in our trials and our sufferings we find comfort and hope at the foot of the cross.

God knows and understands our deepest need.

We know we are a church that is suffering. Our Saviour Jesus meets us in our need.

With the prophet Isaiah we can say of Jesus:

*'Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases;  
yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted.  
But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our  
iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole,  
and by his wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:4-5)*

A healing stream flows from the cross, bringing new life.

The cross was not the end of Jesus.

God raised him from the dead. A new beginning followed.

We are God's resurrection people. We share his victory.

We must believe Coronavirus is not the end of us; it will not have the last word.

We may not yet see what our new beginning might be, but this is not the end.

At the cross we see our sin, we see our sufferings and thirdly we see our **SALVATION**.

At the cross we see Jesus the Saviour of the world.

His outstretched arms reach out to a world in need.

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Each of us has the choice to reach out for Jesus and receive his blessings.

The apostle Paul reminds us that in Jesus we are blessed with every spiritual blessing.

God lavishes his grace on us.

What a great word – 'Lavish'.

Here at the cross is extravagant grace, abundant grace, more than we deserve grace.

The same bible word is used in the gospels to describe the leftovers at the feeding of the 5,000.

Here is more grace than we can imagine.

It overflows into our lives and out to others.

Friends, Jesus is here for you today.

In your need, will you reach out for Jesus?

The cross brings us to the place where the empty are filled and the filled are emptied, where the poor find riches and the rich realise their poverty. Here, at the cross, all who hold out their hands receive what they need. Here, we see our salvation.

We reach out our hands to God today.

In church we hold out our hands to receive bread and wine.

As we gather at the foot of the cross of Jesus, as we eat bread and drink wine, we remember our sin, our sufferings, and our salvation.

With Christ, God will lead us through sacrifice and suffering to the glory and triumph of heaven.

Thanks be to God for the good news of the cross. Amen.

Hymn/song

### Prayers for Others

Let us pray.

Gracious God we give you thanks for the gift of life, for the gift of your Son and

for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We bring before you now the needs of the world, the church and the needs of our families.

We pray especially for ...

Lord, have mercy upon us we pray.

Lead us through the trials, the suffering and sorrow, the challenges and struggles, the tired times and dark places. Be with those who weep or cannot sleep, who have no peace, who seek release.

Lead us with grace, with love and with peace.

Fill us with hope, with patience, with stamina.

Transform us in your image, to grow, to understand, to see that we can be made whole.

And in wholeness may we be the hands and heart of Christ.

We ask these prayers for the sake of Jesus Christ, our living Lord and Saviour. **Amen.**

Unite your prayers with the whole church as you pray The Lord's Prayer. 'Our Father...'

Hymn/song

### The Blessing

We offer our lives and our gifts to the Lord.

May the bountiful blessings of God the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sustainer fall upon you this day and remain with you always.

**Amen.**

### Coffee Time Conversation

- What blessings of God are you thankful for today?
- What is the message of the cross for you today?
- How can you help to carry another's cross this week?

### Suggested Hymns and Songs

#### More Traditional Music:

Love divine all loves excelling  
Lord Jesus Christ you have come to us  
The Old Rugged Cross

#### More Contemporary Music:

Be still for the presence of the Lord  
Faithful One, so unchanging  
Lord I lift your name on high

Keep socially distancing.  
Keep safe. Keep communicating.  
Keep celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord and the coming of the Holy Spirit.  
God bless you and keep you until we meet again.  
My prayers are with you.  
With love,  
Peter