

Haverhill Methodist Church – Worship at Home  
Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021 – Lent 2

Welcome Message – Revd. Peter Goodhall

In the comfort of our homes we gather to worship, whether through the printed word, or through the gift of technology.  
Come; let us worship God revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

Hymn/Song

Prayer

The invitation is given to every person by Jesus Christ:

"Come to me! Follow me! Be my disciples!"

We come to this place, to this time, at the invitation of Jesus Christ.

In the name of Christ, we accept the invitation to discipleship.

In the name of Christ, as his disciples, we worship and praise God.

In the midst of selfishness, we proclaim the God of compassion.

In the midst of despair that threatens to swallow up whole lives,

whole peoples, we proclaim the God of hope. In the midst of indifference and apathy, we proclaim the God of love.

Come, let us worship together and share our witness of God's living presence in the world. **Amen.**

Jesus asked his disciples: "who do you say that I am?"

Peter answered him: "You are the Messiah".

Jesus now predicts his Passion for the first time.

Commitment to Jesus has far reaching implications.

Bible Reading            Mark chapter 8 verses 31-38

Prayer of Confession

Jesus calls us to deny ourselves.

Yet we trust in our own works rather than in God's grace.

Jesus calls each of us to take up our cross.

Yet rather than allow our selfishness and sin to be put to death, we cling to what we know.

Jesus calls us to follow him.

Yet we fear where faith will lead and what it might change in our lives.

In a moment of silence, we confess the sin that separates us from one another and from God.

*Silence for reflection & self-examination*

People of God, hear this good news.

God's covenant with us is true.

God is faithful even when we fail.

Through the Holy Spirit, God gives us the gift of faith and makes us righteous. Believe in the good news that you are set free to live as children of God. Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

Hymn/Song

Sermon

Jesus called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it".

These are hard words to hear.

Jesus is doing some serious truth telling about what our life is all about. The key idea as I see it is our identity.

Before we explore what Jesus is saying, I want to state what Jesus is *not* saying.

We need to leave behind unhelpful ideas about self-denial.

Self-denial is not about enforcing low self-esteem.

Self-denial should not be self-punishment or self-harm.

Self-denial is not about focussing on what is wrong with us or listing our failings.

Self-denial is not about you disliking yourself or thinking you are unworthy of God and His love.

Your inner voice and inner critic may say those things, but you are not to listen to such false accusations but reject them.

Many of us are too hard on ourselves. We undervalue ourselves.

We compare ourselves to others and put ourselves down.

This can lead to anxiety or depression.

Lent can turn the screw of self-disapproval even tighter.

The truth is that God made you in his image and God loves you just as you are. God's love for you is constant and does not depend on how you are feeling about yourself. This applies 24/7 and 365 days a year. We are learning more about the importance of a healthy self-image. If we are to love God and love our neighbour as ourselves, we need a healthy view of ourselves.

So let us leave behind any unhelpful ideas about self-denial.

So what is Jesus saying?

Are self-denial and self-acceptance mutually exclusive?

No. As I stated earlier, the key idea is identity.

During his life on earth, Jesus learned his true identity.

While he was in the desert, over 40 days and 40 nights Jesus rejected a false identity, which Satan tried to tempt him with.

Jesus trusted in his Father's words at his baptism – 'This is my son, whom I love, in whom I am well pleased'.

Listen for God speaking similar words of affirmation over you today.

Remember, our identity as Christians is centred on our relationship with Jesus Christ. We find our true selves in Jesus. He welcomes us. He loves us. He has found us and saved us. Through Jesus we are forgiven. In Jesus we find fullness of life. Jesus is our way, our example, our faithful friend. We follow Jesus. We get behind Jesus.

The disciple Peter was told to do just that by Jesus in our Bible reading. Peter had to deny and reject his own ideas, get behind Jesus and follow his Lord, even to a cross. So it is with us.

We get behind Jesus. We leave behind our insecurities.

We silence our inner critic. We unlearn self-disapproval.

We reject fear and replace it with courage.

We release the things that would define us or constrain us.

We get behind Jesus. We let go of our own plans.

We set aside our own desires. We follow our soul, not our ego.

We get behind Jesus. We find the real us, the person God has made us to be. We find a new identity, a new freedom.

We find a new sense of belonging, a new community in the household of faith, a new family in the church, new values, new vision. We get behind Jesus and we journey with him.

We shall lose much but we shall gain so much more, even life itself.

Hymn/Song

Prayers of Intercession

Loving and healing God, we turn to you in prayer, confident that you are with us and with all people in every moment.

We stand before you as people of hope, trusting in your care and protection. May your faithful love support us and soothe the anxiety of our hearts.

Generous God, fill us with compassion and concern for others, young and old, that we may look after one another in these challenging days. Bring healing to those who are sick with the virus and be with their families.

May those who have died rest in your eternal embrace.

Comfort their family and friends we pray.

Strengthen and protect all medical professionals caring for the sick and all who work in our medical facilities.

Give wisdom to leaders in healthcare and governance that they may make the right decisions for the well-being of all people.

We pray in gratitude for all those in our country who will continue to work in the days ahead in so many fields of life for the sake of us all. Bless them and keep them safe.

We thank you for sacrifices made.

God of creation and life, we place ourselves and our loved ones in your protection.

May the gift of your peace enfold us this day and tomorrow.

This week, when we are tempted to dwell only on our own loneliness, help us reach out to others, being the community we long to have. Thank you for showing us new ways to be the church, the church alive, vibrant and witnessing to Jesus Christ in times like these days. We thank you that you hear these prayers, which we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our 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.  
'Eternal light shine in our hearts.  
Eternal goodness deliver us from evil.  
Eternal power be our support.  
Eternal wisdom scatter the darkness of our ignorance.  
Eternal pity have mercy on us that with all our heart and mind  
and soul and strength we may seek Your face  
and be brought by Your infinite mercy into Your holy  
presence'. **Amen.** (~ Alcuin of York, 8th century)

## Coffee Time Conversation

- Name some of the people and events that have shaped your life. Remember them before God.
- What is God calling you to do this week?
- Pray with the hymn writer: "O let me see thy footmarks and in them plant mine own".

## Suggested Hymns and Songs

### More Traditional Music:

The old rugged cross  
Jesus calls us o'er the tumult of our life's wild restless sea  
Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee

### More Contemporary Music:

The Servant King  
Jesus let your Kingdom come here  
Jesus Christ I think upon your sacrifice  
All I once held dear

Keep social distancing.  
Keep safe.  
Keep communicating.  
God bless you and keep you until we meet again.  
My prayers are with you. With love, Peter