

## Haverhill Methodist Church Worship At Home for 4<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Hello and welcome to worship today! It's Sarah here, we will be sorry to not have you with us in church, but we will remember you and know that as a church family Jesus holds us together, united in his love.

The service today is an all age one and set out in three sections. Next Sunday, the 11<sup>th</sup>, Illuminate youth group are undertaking a 7 mile sponsored walk from Haverhill to Clare to raise money for Haverhill & District Youth for Christ, and the group.

Today we will be thinking about walking, something that many will have not done much of during the lockdowns as we do our best to keep ourselves and others safe. We also acknowledge that some people are not able to walk, or walk very far. As we consider 'walking' today we are considering the broader picture of a journey, however it is made. I hope that you will be inspired and know God's companionship, love and guidance in your walk with him.

### Opening Prayer

Father God, as we come now to praise and worship you, we ask you to make your presence known to us, to guide our thoughts and lead us forward in our daily walk with you. Amen

Song                      My lips shall praise you

My lips shall praise You,

My great Redeemer;

My heart will worship

Almighty Saviour.

You take all my guilt away,

Turn the darkest night to brightest day,

You are the restorer of my soul.

Love that conquers every fear,

In the midst of trouble You draw near,

You are the restorer of my soul.

You're the source of happiness,

Bringing peace when I am in distress,

You are the restorer of my soul.

## Trusting God to look after you - being inspired by nature

Consider these questions for a short while

- What do you love seeing, hearing or feeling when you are in nature?
- What's the most surprising thing you've ever come across?
- How do you feel when you are in nature?

The Bible often uses nature, God's creation, to teach us. God can also speak to us directly through nature; there are so many lessons to learn about God and life through all he has made.

Has God ever inspired or spoken to you whilst out for a walk though his world? One of the things I love about camping is walking to the toilet block in the middle of a clear night and stopping to look at the sky filled with stars. It is so still and the sky so vast and the stars that God made so far away that I can only marvel at how big God is and how small I am. It helps me put things into perspective. And sometimes he treats me to a shooting star!

Do you ever worry about things? I think most of us do, and Jesus talked about that in his sermon on the mount. He encourages us to look at how God cares for the birds and flowers and to understand how much more he cares for us.

Read Matthew 6 vs 25-34.

These words are not parable. They are promise. When we seek his kingdom, place him first in our lives, then he can be trusted to look after all our needs. It is a big leap of faith to let go of the worries and take up the Father's hand as we walk through this life.

You may find further encouragement from the beginning of Psalm 46 verse 10 "Be still and know that I am God."

When you are able, find a lovely place in nature to walk or sit and enjoy the creation. You could take a Bible with you and read these verses again, noticing the birds in the air and the flowers in the field (or a local garden?!).

Hymn                      Love Divine

Love divine, all loves excelling,  
Joy of Heav'n to earth come down;  
Fix in us thy humble dwelling;

All thy faithful mercies crown!  
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,  
Pure unbounded love Thou art;  
Visit us with Thy salvation,  
Enter every trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit  
Into every troubled breast!  
Let us all in Thee inherit;  
Let us find that second rest.  
Take away our bent to sinning;  
Alpha and Omega be;  
End of faith, as its beginning,  
Set our hearts at liberty.

Come, Almighty to deliver,  
Let us all Thy life receive;  
Suddenly return, and never,  
Nevermore Thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above,  
Pray and praise Thee without ceasing,  
Glory in Thy perfect love.

Finish, then, Thy new creation;  
Pure and spotless let us be;  
Let us see Thy great salvation  
Perfectly restored in Thee;  
Changed from glory into glory,  
Till in Heav'n we take our place,  
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,  
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

*Charles Wesley © The Jubilate Group (Admin. by Jubilate Hymns Ltd, sub to Hope Publishing for various regions)  
CCLI:8026*

### Prayer walking with Jesus

Jesus walked everywhere. Realistically I guess it was his only option, and what most people did, but it served his ministry well. It afforded him time to talk with his disciples and to interact with passers-by and even crowds. He was accessible to all, from beggars to religious leaders.

He never rushed, he had time to stop and give his attention to whoever needed it. When we read the Gospels we find example after example of

Jesus carrying out his ministry outside, as he was walking. You could go through one of the Gospels and count how many times this was recorded. You could spend this week meditating on some of his encounters and ask him to speak to you through them, giving you a message for how they relate to us today.

The story of Blind Bartimaeus is one of my favourites. Read it now in Mark 10 verses 46-52.

Through all the noise of the crowd walking with him, Jesus hears the voice of Bartimaeus, discerns a need, and stops. He has time for the beggar most people ignored and had just told to be quiet. Jesus turns from the many to the one and gives him his full attention. There is a very simple exchange, and because of his faith Bartimaeus receives his sight and follows Jesus. Bartimaeus asked and Jesus gave.

Jesus gives us his full attention too. He has time to stop for us, and to walk and talk. So how about going on a prayer walk with Jesus. Our prayers today are based on a virtual walk, using our imaginations, but if you are able to, do go out for a real walk with our Lord. His pace is unhurried and ours should be too. I like to imagine Jesus walking next to me sometimes as I pray, it's easier for me to be quiet and listen to him if I think he's there and not just in the ether, or even within me. It seems to make it more real for me.

You may be an experienced prayer walker already, but here are some ideas for your journey.

- Start by asking him to guide your thoughts and prayers.
- Notice what is around you and discern what you might pray about; a stressed looking parent, an ambulance with its lights on, the businesses or schools you go past. Jesus might guide your attention to a particular house for you to pray for the inhabitants.
- Ask God to bless the people you walk past. You might not know their needs, but he does!
- You might stop for a quick chat with someone, the weather is always a good conversation starter! If they seem open, keep chatting. Ask Jesus to guide your words. Even a quick hello can be such a blessing to people. If it feels right, you could even say you are on a prayer walk and ask if there's anything you can pray for them. Apparently most people will accept and say something. You don't have to pray with them there, but you could offer to. Does that

sound scary to you? It does to me! But 'if God is for us, who can be against us'?

A few years ago our church had a prayer/blessing walk around town. Peter was carrying a wooden cross and a man asked what we were doing. Peter took the opportunity, stopped and had a chat with the man. I can't remember now if he asked for prayer or Peter offered, but a prayer request was made and Peter prayed for him right there. It was so wonderful to witness that God-given encounter.

Prayer walks can be anywhere and any length, how about around the supermarket or even putting the bins out. Whether you are walking for miles or just from the armchair to the kettle, Jesus will be with you.

### Intercessions

Imagine one of your favourite places to walk or visit, with Jesus right there with you. Try to recall as much detail about the scenery as you can, and keep that in mind as you pray, talking with Jesus who is next to you.

There are so many situations and people to be praying for, today let your mind be guided by Jesus.

He might bring to mind world events, our government, education, health and social care, different charities, the spreading of his Good News, people who are without food, shelter, healthcare, friends or family, employment, good physical or mental health, those who are grieving and those who are not safe. He might bring to your mind your own needs too.

As you go on this imaginary prayer walk (or a real one if you can) give time to listen for his voice, to be encouraged by him and allow him to minister to you.

You might like to build in the Lord's Prayer to guide your prayers, or simply pray it at the end.

### Walking is good for us!

There are many blessings to be had from walking or being out in nature. It is good exercise however much we are able to do. Fresh air will do us good too. Being in nature is recognised as being great for our overall wellbeing and for good mental health.

Walking can be a good for spending time with family and friends and can be fun. You could set yourself a little challenge of finding things from

each colour of the rainbow. Or something from as many letters of the alphabet as possible.

God cares about every part of our lives and wants us to enjoy life and live it to the full. He has given us the most amazing planet to live on, and we can see the marks of our creator wherever we look.

### Hymn

“Great is Thy faithfulness,” O God my Father,  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not  
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

“Great is Thy faithfulness!” “Great is Thy faithfulness!”  
Morning by morning new mercies I see;  
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—  
“Great is Thy faithfulness,” Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

*Thomas Obediah Chisholm © 1923. Renewed 1951 Hope Publishing Company CCLI:8026*

### Blessing

God go with you this week, preparing the way for you; to enjoy his creation, to trust him to be sovereign in your life and to provide all you need.

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen