

Haverhill Methodist Church
Worship at Home 12th July 2020

Welcome

Welcome to Haverhill Methodist Church's worship service today. I'm Sarah, a member of the church, and will be leading us again from my garden.

You are very welcome here.

Today will be a bit more relaxed, a little bit different. I'm going to let the Bible do most of the talking. I pray it will be time to encounter God as we listen to his word.

Opening prayer

Father God we come to you now, where we are, ready to spend time with you. Please accept us as we are, for we cannot pretend to be anything else in your presence. Please settle our hearts and minds, remove distractions from within and without us. Grant us the joy of knowing you with and within us and speak your love and wisdom into our hearts.

We hear the words from Psalm 92, verses 1 and 2:

¹ It's so enjoyable to come before you
with uncontainable praises spilling from our hearts!
How we love to sing our praises over and over to you,
to the matchless God, high and exalted over all!

² At each and every sunrise we will be thanking you
for your kindness and your love.

As the sun sets and all through the night,
we will keep proclaiming, "You are so faithful!"

Amen

I recently heard someone mention a translation of the Bible called The Passion Translation. It was an aside to the talk he was giving, but he said it was worth looking at. As I was making notes from the talk, I jotted it down, and later on looked it up.

The blurb about it says this: The Passion Translation is a new, heart-level Bible translation that expresses God's fiery heart of love, merging the emotion and life changing truth of God's word. The goal is to trigger inside every reader an overwhelming response to the truth of the Bible, unfolding the deep mysteries of the scriptures in the love language of God – the language of the heart.

I looked at some reviews of it and people were saying how it had made a huge impact on them, how they had cried reading passages because they had seen God in a new way, or had a new understanding of how God saw them.

I can find it really helpful to use a different translation sometimes as it gives me a new perspective, I can read well known passages in a new light. Occasionally I even pretend I am reading the Bible for the first time to see what impact it has on me.

So we are going to spend some time with God and the Passion Translation today, opening our hearts and minds to both. It doesn't matter if you decide this translation isn't for you, but I hope you can engage with it for today.

We are going to read 3 Bible passages, using them as prayers or to meditate on.

There will be a break for some songs of praise and worship in the middle as we respond to God's goodness and love, and then we will come back for our prayers.

To start off with, we are going to read a story. It's the parable of the prodigal son. But in this translation it is titled The Loving Father. I would love you to immerse yourself in the story. Imagine you are the younger son first of all, as you listen also reflect on any times over this last week or so when you have turned away from God, and then turn back to Him, saying sorry. And then imagine him as the loving father in the story running to you with open arms.

And then the story turns to the older son. As you listen consider if you are harbouring resentment of any kind and bring that to God.

The parable is from Luke 15, verses 11 to the end of the chapter.

The Loving Father

¹¹ Then Jesus said, "Once there was a father with two sons. ¹² The younger son came to his father and said, 'Father, don't you think it's time to give me the share of your estate that belongs to me?' So the father went ahead and distributed among the two sons their inheritance.

¹³ Shortly afterward, the younger son packed up all his belongings and travelled off to see the world. He journeyed to a far-off land where he soon wasted all he was given in a binge of extravagant and reckless living.

¹⁴ “With everything spent and nothing left, he grew hungry, for there was a severe famine in that land. ¹⁵ So he begged a farmer in that country to hire him. The farmer hired him and sent him out to feed the pigs. ¹⁶ The son was so famished, he was willing to even eat the slop given to the pigs, because no one would feed him a thing.

¹⁷ “Humiliated, the son finally realized what he was doing and he thought, ‘There are many workers at my father’s house who have all the food they want with plenty to spare. They lack nothing. Why am I here dying of hunger, feeding these pigs and eating their slop? ¹⁸ I want to go back home to my father’s house, and I’ll say to him, “Father, I was wrong. I have sinned against you. ¹⁹ I’ll never be worthy to be called your son. Please, Father, just treat me like one of your employees.”’

²⁰ “So the young son set off for home. From a long distance away, his father saw him coming, *dressed as a beggar*, and great compassion swelled up in his heart for his son who was returning home. So the father raced out to meet him. He swept him up in his arms, hugged him dearly, and kissed him over and over with tender love.

²¹ “Then the son said, ‘Father, I was wrong. I have sinned against you. I could never deserve to be called your son. Just let me be - ’

“The father interrupted and said, ‘Son, you’re home now!’

²² “Turning to his servants, the father said, ‘Quick, bring me the best robe, my very own robe, and I will place it on his shoulders. Bring the ring, the seal of sonship, and I will put it on his finger. And bring out the best shoes you can find for my son. ²³ Let’s *prepare a great feast* and celebrate. ²⁴ For this beloved son of mine was once dead, but now he’s alive again. Once he was lost, but now he is found!’ And everyone celebrated with overflowing joy.

²⁵ “Now, the older son was out working in the field when his brother returned, and as he approached the house he heard the music of celebration and dancing. ²⁶ So he called over one of the servants and asked, ‘What’s going on?’

²⁷ “The servant replied, ‘It’s your younger brother. He’s returned home and your father is throwing a party to celebrate his homecoming.’

²⁸ “The older son became angry and refused to go in and celebrate. So his father came out and pleaded with him, ‘Come and enjoy the feast with us!’

²⁹ “The son said, ‘Father, listen! How many years have I been working like a slave for you, performing every duty you’ve asked as a faithful son? And I’ve never once disobeyed you. But you’ve never thrown a party for me because of my faithfulness. Never once have you even given me a goat that I could feast on and celebrate with my friends like he’s doing now.

³⁰ But look at this son of yours! He comes back after wasting your wealth on prostitutes and reckless living, and here you are throwing a great feast to celebrate – for him!

³¹ “The father said, ‘My son, you are always with me by my side. Everything I have is yours to enjoy. ³² It’s only right to celebrate like this and be overjoyed, because this brother of yours was once dead and gone, but now he is alive and back with us again. He was lost but now he is found!’”

I love this parable! I have lived this parable, actually. There was a time many years ago that I went my own way, big time. I didn’t actively want to leave God, but by my actions that’s what I did. When I can back to church with my tail between my legs I was welcomed back by the people with open arms. But even better, God gave a woman I hardly knew a passage of Scripture for me. She read it to me and it was just so fitting, and it was God saying that he was angry with me for a while, but he was now restoring me, building me up and making me beautiful again. Some of the words say ‘but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you’, and ‘so now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken.’

To have those words from Isaiah spoken over me was like my Father God throwing his arms around me, celebrating my return, and I felt freedom from my sins.

I don’t know if you have had that experience of God delighting in your return, especially when you expected a good ticking off. But his response is celebratory and full of kindness, compassion and love. Never be afraid or too ashamed to turn back to God. The bridges are never burned and he will be searching the horizon for you, willing you to re-join him.

Let’s pray. Father we thank you for your forgiveness, for your all-embracing hug as we come back to you. You are the perfect loving father and we delight to be with you and pause in wonder to know that you delight to be with us. We thank you and we love you. Amen

Now that we have thought about, and maybe put ourselves right with God, and are assured that he accepts us with joy, we are going to move on to praising him.

For me where The Passion Translation really excels is in the Psalms. There have been so many that I have read that I wanted to share with you. And so I will, but not all of them.

We are going to read Psalm 145. As you read it join in the praise with King David, who wrote it.

Psalm 145 The Passion Translation (TPT)

God's Greatness

King David's poetic song of praise

¹ My heart explodes with praise to you!

Now and forever my heart bows in worship to you,
my King and my God!

² Every day I will lift up my praise to your name
with praises that will last throughout eternity.

³ Lord, you are great and worthy of the highest praise!
For there is no end to the discovery
of the greatness that surrounds you.

⁴ Generation after generation will declare more of your greatness
and declare more of your glory.

⁵ Your magnificent splendour and the miracles of your majesty
are my constant meditation.

⁶ Your awe-inspiring acts of power have everyone talking!
I'm telling people everywhere about your excellent greatness!

⁷ Our hearts bubble over as we celebrate the fame
of your marvellous beauty, *bringing bliss to our hearts*.

We shout with ecstatic joy over your breakthrough for us.

⁸ You're kind and tender-hearted to those who don't deserve it
and very patient with people who fail you.

Your love is like a flooding river overflowing its banks with kindness.

⁹ God, everyone sees your goodness,
for your tender love is blended into everything you do.

¹⁰ Everything you have made will praise you, fulfilling its purpose.
And all your godly lovers will be found bowing before you.

¹¹ They will tell the world of the lavish splendour of your kingdom
and preach about your limitless power.

¹² They will demonstrate for all to see your miracles of might
and reveal the glorious majesty of your kingdom.

¹³ You are the Lord who reigns over your never-ending kingdom through
all the ages of time and eternity!

You are faithful to fulfil every promise you've made.

You manifest yourself as kindness in all you do.^[a]

¹⁴ Weak and feeble ones you will sustain.

Those bent over with burdens of shame you will lift up.

¹⁵ You have captured our attention

and the eyes of all look to you.

You give what they hunger for at just the right time.

¹⁶ When you open your generous hand, it's full of blessings, satisfying the longings of every living thing.

¹⁷ You are fair and righteous in everything you do, and your love is wrapped into all your works.

¹⁸ You draw near to those who call out to you, listening closely, especially when their hearts are true.

¹⁹ Every one of your godly lovers receives even more than what they ask for.

For you hear what their hearts really long for and you bring them your saving strength.

²⁰ God, you watch carefully over all your lovers like a bodyguard, but you will destroy the ungodly.

²¹ I will praise you, Lord!

Let everyone everywhere join me in praising the beautiful Lord of holiness from now through eternity!

We have such a wonderful God! He is so good. That might sound obvious, and it is. But for some, for many, it isn't. There will be times when we don't think so, for different reasons. Perhaps things have not gone well in our lives, we are suffering. I know there are many of us who have pain and struggles and worries.

Sometimes we take things for granted and forget that all good things, even the mundane, are blessings from God.

There are so many people in the world who view God as mean, uncaring, harsh and even irrelevant. We need to show them otherwise.

Read verses 13-19 again. These are the things that God does. Hear them as spoken directly to you, for you. Accept them with thanksgiving, and feel delight and excitement too. This is our God given Kingdom reality.

Isn't that incredible? I feel like I want to live in this Psalm, silly as that sounds, but I want to immerse myself in it, in living with God that way. I wonder if these words speak to you with the same power that they speak to me.

I feel like now is the time to sing!

There will be 3 songs coming up next.

The first verse of Psalm 147 says 'Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! How beautiful it is when we sing our praises to the beautiful God, for praise makes you lovely before him and brings him great delight!

Let's worship God together now.

Forever (sing praise)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7eZoibrmDik>

Give thanks to the Lord our God and King,
His love endures forever.
For He is good He is above all things,
His love endures forever.
Sing Praise, Sing Praise.

With a mighty hand and outstretched arm,
His love endures forever.
For the life that's been reborn,
His love endures forever.
Sing Praise, Sing Praise.

Forever God is faithful,
Forever God is strong.
Forever God is with us,
Forever

From the rising to the setting sun,
His love endures forever.
And by the grace of God we will carry on,
His love endures forever.
Sing Praise, Sing Praise

Forever You are faithful,
Forever You are strong.
Forever You are with us,
Forever and ever, forever.
His love endures forever,
His love endures forever,
His love endures forever.

Bless the Lord O my soul (10 000 Reasons)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXDGE_IRI0E

Bless the Lord oh my soul
Oh my soul
Worship His Holy name
Sing like never before
Oh my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name

The sun comes up
It's a new day dawning
It's time to sing Your song again
Whatever may pass
And whatever lies before me
Let me be singing
When the evening comes

Bless the Lord oh my soul ...

You're rich in love
And You're slow to anger
Your name is great
And Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness
I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons
For my heart to find

Bless the Lord oh my soul ...

And on that day
When my strength is failing
The end draws near
And my time has come
Still my soul will
Sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years
And then forevermore

Bless the Lord oh my soul ...

To God be the glory

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-15v9iworAU&t=57s>

I make no apologies for there being no sermon this week, and you are free to let out a sigh of relief!

I feel like it's good to be able to focus on God's word this time, to allow God to speak to us personally as we read.

Prayers of intercession and The Lord's Prayer

Our prayers of intercession are going to be Psalm 143. As you read it, remember those who need Jesus' healing touch in mind, body or spirit; those in leadership roles, especially governments around the world and those whose circumstances mean they are in danger and need rescuing. We pray this on their behalf and pray that it will be their truth.

Psalm 143 The Passion Translation (TPT)

My Humble Prayer

King David's poetic song when he was chased by Absalom

¹ Lord, you must hear my prayer,
for you are faithful to your promises.

Answer my cry, O righteous God!

² Don't bring me into your courtroom for judgment,
for there is no one who is righteous before you.

³ My enemies have chased and caught me
and crushed my life into dust.

Now I'm living in the darkness of death's shadow.

⁴ My inner being is in depression
and my heart is heavy, dazed with despair.

⁵ I remember the glorious miracles of days gone by,
and I often think of all the wonders of old.

⁶ Now I'm reaching out to you, thirsting for you
like the dry, cracked ground thirsts for rain.

Pause in his presence

⁷ Lord, come quickly and answer me,
for my depression deepens and I'm about to give up.

Don't leave me now or I'll die!

⁸ Let the dawning day bring me revelation
of your tender, unfailing love.

Give me light for my path and teach me, for I trust in you.

⁹ Save me from all my enemies, for I hide myself in you.

¹⁰ I just want to obey all you ask of me.

So teach me, Lord, for you are my God.

Your gracious Spirit is all I need, so lead me on good paths that are pleasing to you, my one and only God!

¹¹ Lord, if you rescue me, it will bring you more glory, for you are true to your promises.

Bring me out of these troubles!

¹² Since I am your loving servant, destroy all those who are trying to harm me.

And because you are so loving and kind to me, silence all of my enemies!

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

We are going to draw to a close now, and there will be a final song, Praise my soul the King of Heaven.

Thank you for being here, I know it was a bit different, but I hope you found refreshment in that. I hope you benefitted from focusing on God's word directly from the Bible, and that you might have a renewed understanding of God's passionate, intimate and personal love for you.

The blessing comes from 2 Thessalonians 3, verse 16:

Now may the Lord himself, the Lord of peace, pour into you his peace in every circumstance and in every possible way. The Lord's tangible presence be with you all. Amen

Praise my soul the King of Heaven

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3dHeRB2c3g>