

# Haverhill Methodist Church

## Worship at Home

2<sup>nd</sup> August 2020

### **Welcome**

Welcome to our worship service today, where we will be revisiting a service from June 2018. The Ability Sunday service was led by the Lantern Group, our church group for adults with learning disabilities.

This was a wonderful uplifting and active service that many people found to be thought provoking and moving.

I have added in new prayers so that they are relevant now, at the time one of our Lantern members took prayer requests and prayed for each of those people in turn.

### **Call to worship and prayer**

Our Call to Worship is from John 13:34-35, the words of Jesus:

*“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.*

*Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.*

*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

Let's pray:

Loving God, we come to worship you today because we love you, and we want to love you more. Thank you for bringing all of us here together, united in love from you and for you.

Accept our praise and worship, grow our friendships and care for one another, smile upon us, we ask in Jesus name. Amen

### **Activity**

At this point in the service everyone took the length of wool that they had been given and tied the ends together with those sitting next to them to create longer lengths. There were lots of different colours and they

represented the different groups within our church, such as the Sunday morning and evening congregations, Lantern, Wednesday Fellowship, Next Door, home groups, the band, and so on. The congregation held onto their wool while we sang Bind Us Together

## **Song**

Bind us together, Lord  
Bind us together  
With cords that cannot be broken  
Bind us together, Lord  
Bind us together  
Bind us together in Love

There is only one God,  
There is only one King  
There is only one Body,  
That is why we sing.      *Bind us together...*

Fit for the glory of God,  
Purchased by His precious Son  
Born with the right to be free  
For Jesus the victory has won.      *Bind us together...*

We are the family of God  
We are the promise divine  
We are God's chosen desire  
We are the glorious new wine.      *Bind us together...*

Bob Gillman, © 1977 Thank You Music (Admin. By Integrity Music) CCLI:8026

## **Explanation**

Jesus ties us all together to be one united family (everyone held the wool up so we could see it). Psalm 133 vs 1 says 'How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity.' As well as each group within the church being represented by the different colours of wool, it is important to remember that we each have contributed. It is wonderful and colourful, and we can be used by Jesus to do great and useful things, just like this wool will now be knitted into something good, and useful, because Janet is now going to knit her way through the service to make a scarf!

## Prayers

Lord God we bring to you our prayers for our world, for each other and for ourselves. Thank you that you hear us as we cry out and you weep with us through the troubling and painful times. We also know that when things go well you rejoice with us.

We pray for our world, in turmoil with the effects of coronavirus. We ask that you will guide the scientist who are working hard to understand it and produce a cure and a vaccine; for those in leadership whose job it is to keep the people they are responsible for safe, and for all of us who are living under the threat of the virus. We ask for wisdom, good decisions to be made and for protection. We ask that the pandemic will end and we will come out of it positively; continuing to care for those around us, to question how much we really need to buy and to keep in touch with people near and far.

We remember that wars still rage and there are injustices being carried out that harm people and the environment. We pray for the peacemakers, social workers, legislators, activists, churches and charities who strive to protect the vulnerable and make our world a better place. We ask that you will continue to be at work in our world because we want to see your Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven.

Lord we ask you to be especially close to those we know who are ill, in pain, sad, anxious or grieving. Please bring them healing and comfort through your Holy Spirit.

We remember our church groups who are not currently meeting. Please be close to each member, especially those who are currently more socially isolated and missing their groups and friends. We ask that you will guide Peter, the stewards and the church council as they make plans to start using our church buildings again.

We thank you Lord for the safe delivery of Ellie and rejoice with the whole Tappin family. We bless them in your name Jesus to know your love surrounding them, to settle into life with a new baby and to have the rest they need.

Finally Father we bring to you our own needs, and those of whom we love. Let's have a few moments of quiet to bring our own requests before our Saviour.

Thank you for being with us and hearing us. Amen

## **Lord's Prayer**

### **Song                      My Lighthouse**

In my wrestling and in my doubts  
In my failures You won't walk out  
Your great love will lead me through  
You are the peace in my troubled sea  
You are the peace in my troubled sea

In the silence, You won't let go  
In the questions, Your truth will hold  
Your great love will lead me through  
You are the peace in my troubled sea  
You are the peace in my troubled sea

My lighthouse, my lighthouse  
Shining in the darkness. I will follow You  
My lighthouse, my lighthouse  
I will trust the promise  
You will carry me safe to shore (oh-oh-oh-oh-oh)  
Safe to shore (oh-oh-oh-oh-oh)  
Safe to shore (oh-oh-oh-oh-oh)  
Safe to shore

I won't fear what tomorrow brings  
With each morning I'll rise and sing  
My God's love will lead me through  
You are the peace in my troubled sea  
You are the peace in my troubled sea

My lighthouse, my lighthouse...

Fire before us, You're the brightest  
You will lead us through the storms

My lighthouse, my lighthouse...

*Chris Llewellyn, Gareth Gilkeson (Rend Collective) © 2013 Thankyou Music (Admin. by Integrity Music) CCLI:8026*

## **Bible reading**

Luke 19 vs 1-10 The story of Zacchaeus was read out with an accompanying drama by the Lantern members and we handed out lots of different hats to members of the congregation to wear and be part of 'the crowd'.

## **Talk**

What a great story.

Jesus comes along, with a crowd of people.

People like you and me. The ordinary citizens who got on with life. They earned their living, had families and friends. Some would have been doing quite well for themselves, others struggled.

But there was a fly in the ointment. Something unwelcome that made life difficult for them all. Something that they could do nothing about. Something they could not avoid. Something that left a bitter taste in the mouth. Something rotten to the core. There is a baddie in the story that united them all in hatred and fear, I dare say.

Zacchaeus! Not a something, but a someone. Zacchaeus the tax collector. Let's face it, not many people actually like paying taxes. But we can see the benefits and accept that we get something back.

But Zacchaeus was a thug of a tax collector. A bully. A thief. He took the taxes and then some more, a lot more, for himself. It was daylight robbery, and he was getting rich by making everyone else poor.

Everyone in the town would have known exactly who he was and would have avoided him at all costs.

But here they all are, muddled together following this man called Jesus through their town of Jericho.

This man who was just like them. But also not like anyone else they had ever come across. A man who looked and spoke like them; but spoke with the wisdom and authority that made people listen. And then tell others about him so that they felt compelled to come and see and hear and walk with him on his journey. Not only that. He healed people. He made them better, sometimes better than they had ever been in their whole life. He was a person on their side. He challenged the religious authorities and spoke against the unjust. The bad people. They might not have understood just what they were witnessing, the very Son of God doing his thing, but they knew it was different, and they knew that it was good.

So when they see the dastardly Zacchaeus, a short man, up a tree, what would they have made of that I wonder? Perhaps they laughed at him. Maybe they hated him all the more for getting a good view and putting himself in the highest place.

Perhaps some anticipated that Jesus would spot him and expected some sharp words for him relating to how bad he was.

When Jesus stopped and called to Zacchaeus, I bet there were a fair few people looking forward to a good showdown. A real telling off by Jesus. Humiliation at last for Zacchaeus.

But Jesus is always full of surprises! And for those of us who think we are good, maybe even better than others, or looking to see someone brought down, the surprises are rarely in our favour.

Jesus surprises them all by inviting himself to stay with Zacchaeus. Was it all going horribly wrong? Was this man of the people, for the people, caving in and looking for some extravagance? A really decent meal and bed for the night. Top class entertainment. Being paid off for choosing a hated man, making the man considered 'the scum of the earth' a hero?

They all started muttering, 'Jesus going to the home of a sinner'? We thought he was a holy man of God, we had high hopes and now he's letting us down.

And Zacchaeus, chosen, picked out as special by the holy man, has to respond. He has a choice to make. And everyone is watching with baited breath.

Will he lord it over them all, lay on the biggest feast the town has seen. Will he show off, puff himself up and become even more intolerable?

Unbelievably, no.

In that very moment, without any time to think it through, he responds. He responds to the unconditional acceptance of Jesus. The Spirit of God is at work in a flash and everything in his hardened uncaring wicked heart is changed.

Totally, inconceivably, unexpectedly.

Zacchaeus is convicted of his sin by the Holy Spirit, no rebuke from the mouth of Jesus is even needed. We know the passage says that he came down from the tree. Did you notice that after he welcomed Jesus and the crowd muttered that Zacchaeus stood up? I doubt he came down and sat himself on a chair. I think he was kneeling before his new Lord and Saviour.

When God works in someone's life and they respond with repentance, joy and acceptance, that life is changed. The crowd, all of a sudden, were looking at a completely changed man, although he was still short!

He declares boldly that he will give away half of all he has to the poor. The Spirit was stirring him up! And that wasn't all. He acknowledges directly his sinful stealing ways (although perhaps his humanity creeps in with the 'IF I have cheated anybody...' comment!) and says he'll pay back 4 times the amount. I wonder who started the queue for their share?!

We don't know what went on after that. Did Zacchaeus hold the biggest celebration for everyone? Did he come true on his promises? Did the people forgive him? Did he stay a tax collector? Did he fade into obscurity or was his story told through generations? We know this was significant because this bad guy turned good has been immortalised in the Bible.

And what a story of hope it is. This truly is good news. That short story ends by Jesus saying Zacchaeus had been saved. And that he, Jesus, had come to look for the lost and save them.

How do you relate to this story? Are you 'indignant of Jericho'? Annoyed that the same love is there for the bad guys as it is for you, who is a very decent person? Are we only begrudgingly accepting that God loves us all just the same.

Maybe there is someone you could do with forgiving in your life? Or you need to ask for forgiveness yourself?

I hope we can all relate to Zacchaeus. There's not one person here who is perfect. We decide that some actions are worse than others, and we can judge ourselves and other people accordingly. And quite rightly there are consequences for the things that are done wrong in this world.

To God, wrong is wrong. And if we go our own way, away from God's perfect plan for us, we are lost.

Jesus said he came to find, not just happen to bump into, but to search for, the lost. He is active in reaching out to us, regardless of the good and bad things we think and do.

What a great day that was for Zacchaeus, and what a great day for us too when we say sorry to God and accept his forgiveness. Jesus is here to seek and save us.

## **Prayer**

Dear God,

Thank you for the story of Zacchaeus. Thank you that Jesus chose to spend time with him and change his life. We are sorry for the things we have said and done that do not match up with what you say is best for us. Thank you for choosing us just like you chose Zacchaeus. Please forgive us just like you forgave Zacchaeus. Please change our lives just like you changed Zacchaeus. Amen

## **Song                      Strength will rise**

Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord  
We will wait upon the Lord  
We will wait upon the Lord

Our God, You reign forever  
Our hope, our Strong Deliverer  
You are the everlasting God  
The everlasting God  
You do not faint  
You won't grow weary

You're the defender of the weak  
You comfort those in need  
You lift us up on wings like eagles



## **Blessing**

The Lantern group stood at the front and sang their blessing song 'The Father Himself Loves You' and we then said this blessing together:

**God the Father watch over us** (*hands up*)

**God the Son walk with us** (*hand out to side*)

**God the Spirit work through us** (*hands crossed over body*)

**Until we meet again** (*wave goodbye*)

## **Song                      Friend of God**

Who am I that you are mindful of me  
That you hear me, when I call  
Is it true that you are thinking of me  
How you love me, it's amazing (Who am I Lord)

### **CHORUS:**

I am a friend of God  
I am a friend of God  
I am a friend of God  
He calls me friend

God Almighty  
Lord of Glory  
You have called me friend

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