

Haverhill Methodist Church Worship at Home  
21<sup>st</sup> March 2021

Welcome and opening prayer

Welcome to our Sunday service. We are all united together by the Holy Spirit to worship as God's family. As we draw near to God let us pray. Father God we come to you now, we may be distant physically from one another but you are able to bring us together in spirit, as brothers and sisters in Christ to worship you. None of us are perfect. Some of us are feeling broken, frazzled, exhausted and anxious. Some of us are feeling good and hopeful. Some of us are aware of our shortcomings over the last week. We approach your throne of grace together, united, and seeking forgiveness and healing. We ask you to pour your loving grace and mercy over us as we worship you. Amen

Hymn                    Tell out my soul

Reading                John 12, vs 20-33

Sermon

This is the 5<sup>th</sup> week in Lent, and I wonder how you are doing with any Lenten sacrifices. Or perhaps you have taken something up. I don't give things up anymore, but I have committed to ensuring I read my Bible every day and spend more time in prayer. I remember giving up chocolate for Lent as a teenager, and one year a friend gave me a box of chocolates in the very first week. If I remember rightly they were mint Matchmakers, still a favourite! I had to thank them and say I would keep them until Easter. Easter day that wonderful day of triumphant celebration and gorging yourself with chocolate or crisps, or whatever it is that was surrendered. Sometimes we just count down the days until we can go back to normal, rewarded for our discipline.

This Bible passage, in John chapter 12 is a tough one. I recommend reading the whole chapter, and even a bit before it to get the full picture of what was going on.

You can read about how Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, and then how he and his disciples had withdrawn to a place near the wilderness as there was a plot to kill him. And then they return, on their way to Jerusalem and Jesus had a meal in Bethany back at the home of his close friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus. And then the triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

The pressure was mounting on Jesus, there was a price on his head, he knew what was to come.

We pick up the story where there were still people flocking to see him, including some Greeks who asked for an audience with him. The passage says they asked to see him, and this translates as 'have an interview with.'

Just stop to imagine for a moment how Jesus was experiencing all of this. There was no escape, no opportunity to get alone with God, just people crowding around, some hailing him as King with palm branches, some out to stop him once and for all. And in all of this, His resolute choice to keep going, to follow his Father's will, to fulfil His earthly mission. To sacrifice his very life, understanding that through His death would come a seismic shift in the universe, an opportunity for new life, and a multiplication of that new life, a new way of life for us all.

And so this request for time with him by the Greeks is perhaps a breaking point for Jesus. His response is neither yes or no. He says in verse 23 onwards 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.'

I can just imagine Andrew and Philip replying rather timidly 'okay...so what do we tell the Greeks?'

But Jesus is laying out what is to happen, using nature to help explain the principle. Sometimes we need something dying, or coming to an end, in order to see more growth. That can be painful. This analogy isn't just about Jesus' death. It's a principle for us as we follow him.

As we journey through Lent, a time of giving up, of surrender, of preparation, of prayer, we can be asking God to show us how He wants us to serve and follow Jesus in a sacrificial way.

'Whoever loves his life will lose it, the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.' These are stark words from Jesus. It is not a call to live a life of misery, but to put aside personal success. Love for God must be such that all other loves are, by comparison, hatred. These are tough, challenging words that can't be sugar coated, and we shouldn't

try to. We shouldn't skim read them and move on quickly. We can sit with these words, this challenge, prayerfully, openly, honestly, and ask God to show us our next steps. We can trust that what He asks of us will be worth the sacrifice, and that He will honour us for it.

So my questions for reflection are these...

What do we as individuals and as a church community need to allow to die in our lives in order for there to be a surge in growth of the Kingdom?

Are we willing to allow this?

Where is Jesus at work in Haverhill, that maybe we aren't even aware of, and are we willing to be where He is?

Song of reflection Hymn of surrender

You might like to use the words from this song to help you reflect on your response to those questions, and as a prayer.

This will be my hymn of surrender, this will be my prayer to You  
To move beyond just holy intentions and let my life be spent on You  
No compromise, I won't give You just half my life

If it's all or nothing, let it all be, let it all be for Jesus  
Let it all be, let it all be for Jesus

There's a cross You call me to carry, deny myself and follow You  
And as I run for You in Your kingdom, I'll lose my life but never lose  
For less of me is more of You

All for Jesus, Lord and Saviour, this will be my hymn of surrender  
From this moment, to forever, this will be my hymn of surrender  
All for Jesus, Lord and Saviour, this will be my hymn of surrender

From this moment, to forever, this will be my hymn of surrender  
All for Jesus, Lord and Saviour, this will be my hymn of surrender  
From this moment, to forever, this will be my hymn of surrender  
Let it all be, let it all be for Jesus

Written by Mitch Wong, Matt Redman, Joshua Siverberg, Jacob Sooter

Prayers of intercession and Lord's Prayer

We bring our prayers for others before the Lord

God of the blessed  
we praise you,  
for mercy shown, grace given,  
living water, Spirit's power.  
We ask you  
for daily strength,  
hope for tomorrow,  
your word to guide,  
strong feet to follow

The Psalmist says:  
"Show me your ways, O LORD,  
teach me your paths;  
guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are God my Saviour,  
and my hope is in you all day long."  
(Psalm 25:4-5)

God of the oppressed  
we bring to you  
the broken ones, forgotten ones,  
exploited and abused ones.  
Bring freedom and release,  
love and compassion  
to damaged hearts and souls  
**(silence)**

God of compassion  
**ALL: Hear our prayer**

God of the distressed,  
we bring to you  
the grieving ones, hurting ones,  
suffering and wounded ones.  
Bring wholeness and healing  
comfort and relief,  
to broken bodies and minds  
**(silence)**

God of compassion  
**ALL: Hear our prayer**

God of the dispossessed  
we bring to you  
the lonely ones, the homeless ones,

thirsty, tired and penniless ones.

Bring hope and sustenance  
physical and spiritual food,  
to hungry bodies and souls

**(silence)**

God of compassion

**ALL: Hear our prayer**

We hold a time a silence as we bring to God those we wish to pray for.

The LORD is good to all;

he has compassion on all he has made.

May the peace, love and compassion of the Lord

Be with you now and always

**AMEN**

**We say together the Lord's Prayer**

Hymn

Amazing Grace

Closing prayer and blessing

Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, we thank you for being with us, for guiding our thoughts and ministering to our needs through your Holy Spirit. I pray that as we go out into this week ahead, whatever it may hold, we will cling to you, we will seek your perfect will for us, we will trust you and we will share your love with those we are in touch with.

Be blessed in the name of Jesus Christ to know his goodness and presence with you this week. Amen