

## Sunday Service Haverhill Methodist Church UK

Sunday Feb 7<sup>th</sup> 2021

### Opening psalm and prayer

*A song of the stairway, The Passion translation*

<sup>1-2</sup> I look up to the mountains and hills, longing for God's help.

But then I realize that our true help and protection  
come only from the Lord,

our Creator who made the heavens and the earth.

<sup>3</sup> He will guard and guide me, never letting me stumble or fall.

God is my keeper; he will never forget nor ignore me.

<sup>4</sup> He will never slumber nor sleep;

he is the Guardian-God for his people, Israel.

<sup>5</sup> Jehovah himself will watch over you;

he's always at your side to shelter you safely in his presence.

<sup>6</sup> He's protecting you from all danger both day and night.

<sup>7</sup> He will keep you from every form of evil or calamity  
as he continually watches over you.

<sup>8</sup> You will be guarded by God himself.

You will be safe when you leave your home  
and safely you will return.

He will protect you now,  
and he'll protect you forevermore!

Oh Lord, we come before you today thankful for your word, your  
promise that you will never leave us never forget us. You are alert  
to our every need and are the answer to our every fear. We are  
looking at a future we don't recognise but we are reassured of the  
safety of your arms, in all circumstances. Let that reassurance  
make us bold! Make us bold to share our faith through action, for  
you are recognised through it. We worry about sharing our faith,  
fearing being made to look foolish but we can be certain that your  
work alone is enough, for people to see you.

Amen

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## **Welcome dear readers,**

Today's service on Zoom has some interactions within it so I'm sorry we can't see you! I have attached links where possible, if you wish to see the videos.

After the words of welcome we watched a film clip which I did not name. The online congregation were asked to identify the film, what was it about and why might I have chosen it?

<https://youtu.be/AM5EYO5wWMA>

A brief discussion followed. It was a humorous film by the way!

## **Song 1**

'Look up Child' by Lenelle Michele and Lauren Daigle

<https://youtu.be/Zq-3ZVdTQlo>

Where are You now  
When darkness seems to win?  
Where are You now  
When the world is crumbling?

Oh I, I-I-I, I hear You say  
I hear You say  
"Look up child", hey  
"Look up child", hey

Where are You now (Where are You?)  
When all I feel is doubt?  
Oh, where are You now  
When I can't figure it out?

Oh I, I-I-I, I hear You say  
I hear You say  
"Look up child", hey  
"Look up child", hey  
"Look up child", hey  
"Look up..."

You're not threatened by the war  
You're not shaken by the storm  
I know You're in control  
Even in our suffering

Even when it can't be seen  
I know You're in control  
Oh I, I-I-I, I hear You say  
I hear You say  
"Look up child", hey  
"Look up child", hey  
"Look up child"  
I hear You say, You say, You say (Hey)  
"Look up child"  
I hear You say, You say, You say...

*Jason Ingram, Lauren Daigle, Paul Mabury © 2018 CentricSongs (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing) See You At The Pub (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing) Fellow Ships Music (Admin. by Essential Music Publishing LLC) Flychild Publishing (Admin. by Essential Music Publishing LLC) So Essential Tunes (Admin. by Essential Music Publishing LLC) CCLI:8026*

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## **Gospel of Mark 1: 29-39 The Passion Translation**

<sup>29</sup> Now, as soon as they left the meeting, they went straight to Simon and Andrew's house, along with Jacob and John. <sup>30</sup> Simon's mother-in-law was bedridden, sick with a high fever, so the first thing they did was to tell Jesus about her. <sup>31</sup> He walked up to her bedside, gently took her hand, and raised her up! Her fever disappeared and she began to serve them.

<sup>32</sup> Later in the day, just after the Sabbath ended at sunset, the people kept bringing to Jesus all who were sick and tormented by demons, <sup>33</sup> until the whole village was crowded around the house. <sup>34</sup> Jesus cured many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons. But he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew who he really was.

<sup>35</sup> The next morning, Jesus got up long before daylight, left the house while it was dark, and made his way to a secluded place to give himself to prayer. <sup>36</sup> Later, Simon and his friends searched for him, <sup>37</sup> and when they finally tracked him down, they told him, "Everyone is looking for you—they want you!"

<sup>38</sup> Jesus replied, "We have to go on to the surrounding villages so that I can give my message to the people there, for that is my

mission.”<sup>39</sup> So he went throughout the region of Galilee, preaching in the Jewish synagogues and casting out demons.

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## Sermon

### ‘Follow me’ He says, but where are we going now!

The first weeks of Jesus’ ministry were non-stop. Keeping moving, moving forward, and rarely standing still. He left people clamouring for more as He moved on elsewhere.

Yet He took time out in the desert place. Our first belief is that He went there just to pray. He certainly did which is a valuable lesson for us all, but was that the only reason I wonder?

‘Follow me’ we are told. Until recently we thought we knew where we were going. Not now. We used to know the rules and had some idea what the future might look like, but not now.

Two weeks ago when Sarah led the service she explained what a difference changing one little word can make. If we change ‘got to’ into ‘get to’, it radically changes things. For example ‘I’ve got to pray’ is radically changed into ‘I get to pray!’ I’m going to suggest that is what we do in our new circumstances!

Have you ever had that nagging feeling inside you just had to do something even though you had no idea what the consequences would be? It felt like you had no choice about it and to do otherwise would just not sit right with you. I think that might describe what Simon and Andrew felt. That might be what it feels like to answer Jesus’ call “follow me”.

I guess we have all looked at our own lives and asked the eternal question “what is it all about?” Haven’t we all faced an unpleasant truth about ourselves or longed for a better way of living, then made changes? That is a “follow me” moment.

Sometimes these ‘follow me’ moments in life take us to the sweet spots. Sometimes they take us places we never wanted to go to or never imagined. Like right now, into the pandemic. Each of these

moments in whatever form they come takes us more deeply into ourselves and we start asking ourselves difficult questions. Whether we are in the sweet spot or a dark place we ultimately connect with the Holy. The 'follow me' moments of life are less about where we are going and more about who we are becoming!

Just prior to the events in our reading today Simon, Andrew, James and John heard the command to 'follow me'. And they did! Probably most of us today would think of a hundred reasons why we couldn't do as they did. I wonder if we look at these words too narrowly. 'Follow me' isn't necessarily about physically uprooting ourselves, nor is it restricted to our religious beliefs or a particular way we live our lives.

What if the 'follow me' invitation is more about stepping into a more fully-rounded life? What if we replace our natural fear of breaking out of our comfort zone with a sense of excitement, thrill and adventure, as we 'follow me!' Using Sarah's method of replacing the 'got to' with 'get to!'

For example I get to step outside the box because I feel inside me it must be done!! Or, swapping the 'we have always done things that way' with 'I'm going to try something new because I want to follow wherever God is going?'

And where are we going? What a question that is! If we have learnt anything in this last year it is we have no idea what the next day will bring. We have been exposed to this so long even the fearful have become somewhat inured by it, maybe even blasé? Covid19 has brought suffering and death to millions around the globe and there is some way to go. Our faith may have wavered at times and we may find God nowhere to be seen. That is very much a dark place, a night-time place or a desert place. So what do we do when it appears God has sneaked off and left us alone?

Consider the desert place, where on that day described in our gospel reading Jesus went out early in the morning to pray. He went out of sight, out of touch (no mobile phones!) and his disciples had to search high and low to find him. Did they look in the safety of

town? Around the familiarity of neighbouring houses? Standing at the door? Finally they went into the desert.... It was there they found him.

We are in a desert place right now. There is no doubt about that, but think of this, the disciples found Him in the desert place.

Regardless of the darkness we are never left alone, but sometimes we have to actively search, to reach out for Him. His withdrawing to the desert place is in reality an invitation for us to move to a new place. He calls us out of the comfort of our homes into the vulnerability of the wilderness. A deserted place when all we can do is pray.

Most of us struggle with that thought, we tend to avoid the desert place. There is nowhere to hide and we have to face up to who we are and who we are not. We begin to realise that our successes, possessions and accomplishments don't actually count for much. In that desert place we have to concede that we are not in control.

And that is the point of personal revelation and a massive springboard to better things! When all our pre-suppositions about what our life should look like, are stripped bare, then we know absolutely crystal clear, it is completely about 'follow me'... in the desert place there is only God.... Jesus draws us there to draw us deeper into the heart of God. Into falling deeply in love with the love of God that never fails.

It is in this desert place that we can begin again. Stripped back, grateful and full of prayer we can be sure the Good News of Jesus starts in the darkest of places and will be carried into the next times.

Remember, have we 'got to' follow Jesus? Or, we 'get to' follow Jesus!

There can be no doubt God is doing something new. Out of the global disaster will come a new way. To some extent we can see some trends already.

Such as a re-evaluation of what really matters to people, of remembering the importance of the family. Of a better work-life balance. Yet there is much to come we cannot know.

I can tell you that agencies that need volunteers are overwhelmed by applications, people are realising there is more to life than self.

Fresh Expressions of Church are popping up like mushrooms across the globe and there are hundreds here in the UK, if not thousands, spreading the gospel by being the gospel.

Countless millions are searching online for information about faiths and particularly prayer. Millions are forming online communities of faith, all over the world. In our early experiments on our own Facebook page we are attracting thousands of views. Yes it might seem very strange to some of us but it is a fact and God is in it.

Out of the darkness of the desert, the light of Christ is shining bright. The pandemic has forced us to break with our own traditions and whether we like change or not we have all learned new ways of communicating and hasn't that been fantastic! However long we are forced to stay inside, the gospel message is spreading exponentially through word and through the www. The gospel could be compared to an unstoppable virus, but it doesn't hurt, it heals. It doesn't destroy, it transforms.

Yes we feel trapped right now, trapped by the quarantine, but the Word of God can never be trapped.

2 Timothy: 2-9 "And because I preach this Good News, I am suffering and have been chained like a criminal. But the Word of God cannot be chained" How amazing! Even when Paul was imprisoned the Word of God could not be stopped!

I believe we are living in a time when the gospel could spread faster and farther than ever before, because of the way so many have re-evaluated their lives. Using the power of the internet.

In the early church the Gospel spread from Jerusalem to Rome in under 30 years, without planes, trains or automobiles. In this age, the Word can be spread globally instantly.

I will end with this. We cannot take hold of the future if we are not prepared to let go of the past. Letting go can be extremely painful and difficult as we all value the security of what is familiar. Yet how

exciting is it that we are all witnessing God forming something new!  
Not every generation is able to say that!

So continue to pray, and listen carefully for when he whispers the future!

Amen

### **Prayer**

Is either, following the link here <https://youtu.be/AnjkhF3Xjg8> a video piece of poetic art or;

Father

Thank you that in a world of despair,

You are our Hope.

In a world of darkness,

You are our Light.

In a world of sorrow,

You are our joy.

Help us to share the Hope of our hearts with one another.

Enable us to give Hope to others through Your work amongst us.

Use us to transform our nation and to spread Your Hope to every corner of this nation.

May our land flourish by the preaching of Your word and the praising of Your name.

In Jesus Name.

Amen.

May the beauty of God

be reflected in your eyes,

the love of God

be reflected in your hands,

the wisdom of God

be reflected in your words,

and the knowledge of God

flow from your heart,



that all might see,  
and seeing, believe

Amen

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Our final song can be found using this link

<https://youtu.be/d5rjyDPWAdk>

How Great is our God

Chris Tomlin

The splendour of the King, clothed in majesty

Let all the Earth rejoice

All the Earth rejoice

He wraps himself in light

And darkness tries to hide

And trembles at His voice

Trembles at His voice

How great is our God, sing with me

How great is our God, and all will see

How great, how great is our God

Age to age He stands

And time is in His hands

Beginning and the end

The Godhead Three in One

Father Spirit Son

The Lion and the Lamb

The Lion and the Lamb

How great is our God, sing with me

How great is our God, and all will see

How great, how great is our God

Name above all names

Worthy of our praise

My heart will sing

How great is our God

You're the name above all names  
You are worthy of our praise  
And my heart will sing  
How great is our God

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