

Worship Sheet
Sunday 18th July 2021



Welcome to this week's worship. We worship knowing that, whether we are at home or in church, we are coming into the presence of God with the Church family.

Let us spend a few moments in quiet, as we prepare ourselves for worship. Maybe light a candle, or gaze in wonder at what you can see out the window, knowing that God sees you preparing to worship and focusing on him.

Stephen

Call to Worship – Psalm 145:9-12

The LORD is good to all;

he has compassion on all he has made.

¹⁰ All your works praise you, LORD;

your faithful people extol you.

¹¹ They tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,

¹² **so that all people may know of your mighty acts
and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.**



Hymn: StF 28 Jesus Calls Us Here to Meet Him (*Sing, read, pray, proclaim the words*)

John Bell (b1949) and Graham Maule (b.1958)

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Prayer and Lord's Prayer

Dear loving, heavenly Father,
we thank you for the wonders of your creation
and the beauty of your earth,
which remind us of you unbounding love
and give us a glimpse of your glory.

Dear Lord Jesus,
we thank you for coming to earth and living amongst us,
for showing us the love of God
and the way to our heavenly Father.
We thank you for your life, example, teaching and care.
We thank you for your death upon the cross
and the forgiveness and new life you give us.
We praise you for your resurrection
and the hope and knowledge of eternal life in you.

Dear Lord Jesus,
we thank you for sending us the Holy Spirit,
who fills us with your love, peace, kindness, patience and joy
and who inspires us, challenges us and strengthens us.
We pray that you would make us sensitive to your prompting.



As we worship you today,
we praise you Father, who created us;
we praise you Son, who saved us;
and we praise you Holy Spirit who guides us.

We bring these prayers in the precious name of Jesus,
who taught us when we pray, to say –

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Readings:

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Mark 14:12-26

On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, 'Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?'

¹³ So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, 'Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. ¹⁴ Say to the owner of the house he enters, "The Teacher asks: where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?" ¹⁵ He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.'

¹⁶ The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

¹⁷ When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. ¹⁸ While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, 'Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me – one who is eating with me.'

¹⁹ They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, 'Surely you don't mean me?'

²⁰ 'It is one of the Twelve,' he replied, 'one who dips bread into the bowl with me. ²¹ The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.'

²² While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take it; this is my body.'

²³ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

²⁴ 'This is my blood of the ^[a] covenant, which is poured out for many,' he said to them. ²⁵ 'Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'

²⁶ When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.



Footnotes: Mark 14:24 Some manuscripts *the new*

Reflection – The Last Supper – Mark 14:12-26

Many years ago, in a small country chapel, a Sunday School teacher was teaching her class about Jesus turning water into wine, when one little boy asked her about the wine. She replied that the wine, which Jesus had made from the water was “of course unfermented!” From the little experience which I have of the Jewish way of life, I very much doubt that it was unfermented. Wine is often seen as a blessing of God and it is an important part of the Passover supper.

Over the past few Tuesday evenings, some of us have been looking at St Mark’s Gospel. During the last session, we looked at his account of The Last Supper. Someone noted that the meal was prepared in secret and it read like a John Le Carre novel! Jesus was aware that people were out to get him and to be able to share this last meal with his disciples he had to prepare for it in secret. It was really important to him to have this last time with his friends.

So, those who were sent into the city to get everything ready were to look out for a man carrying a water jar. He would be easy to find as it was the women who fetched the water, just as they do in many countries today. It was unusual to see a man carrying a water pot and so when they found him, he would take them to an upper room. Most houses then had only one floor, but the larger Jewish houses also had upper rooms, which were accessed by outdoor steps. These rooms were used for storage, for providing for guests, for somewhere to pray, to be quiet and to meditate, and for a place for a rabbi to teach his intimate band of disciples.

The preparations would have included the searching for and the removing of leaven, as at the Passover the Jews ate unleavened bread. They sacrificed a lamb at the temple and then they brought it home and roasted on a spit over an open fire, as nothing, such as the sides of a pan, must touch the lamb.

When preparing the table, the disciples would have placed the following items on it. Firstly, the lamb as a reminder that on the first Passover, the Hebrews in slavery in Egypt smeared the blood of lambs on their door posts so that the angel of death would pass over their households as it struck down the first born of every living creature in Egypt. Secondly, the unleavened bread, as the escaping Hebrews did not have time to make leavened bread and so ate unleavened bread in haste. There was also a bowl of salt water to recall the years during which they shed tears of suffering as slaves in Egypt and how God enabled them to cross the Red Sea. Similarly, there were bitter herbs reflecting the bitterness of slavery. There was also a paste of fruits and nuts, which is called, “Charosheth”. The paste represents the clay used for making bricks. Cinnamon sticks were pushed through the paste symbolising the straw which was also used for the bricks. Finally, there were four cups of wine, which stand for the four promises of God in Exodus 6:6-7, which says, *“Therefore, say to the Israelites: “I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.” I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.”*



These preparations would have been made and the table already set out when Jesus and the disciples arrived for their Passover supper. When they were slaves in Egypt, the people would have stood to eat, dressed and ready to go at a moment’s notice when Pharaoh let them go. Jesus and his friends would now eat whilst reclining at the table. This in itself was a symbol of freedom, as only people who were free reclined to eat. This was an important religious occasion, but also a powerful political act. They were saying that they may be under Roman rule, but actually we are God’s free people, and through centuries of oppression, they would continue to make this statement. It shows faith and trust in God in all situations; hope as God does hear our cries; and love as God freely and lovingly saves us, his people.

During the meal, Jesus dips two pieces of bread, with bitter herbs between them, in the paste, which is called “the sop”, (a reminder of slavery), and says that one of them will betray him. All the disciples are incredulous and don't think that it can be possibly be them. Judas is still there and takes part in the Supper. Mark does not tell us when Judas leaves, and so perhaps he slinks away later in the Garden of Gethsemane, or during the meal as the other gospels suggest. As Mark does not say that Judas has left, it is a powerful suggestion that all are welcome at the Lord's Table.



When Jane and I were living in Newton Abbot, during my solicitor days, we were in church one Sunday morning waiting for our turn to go to the communion rail for the bread and wine, when I noticed one of the local probation officers at the rail. Waiting to receive was a clerk to the magistrates and in another batch of receivers was one of the magistrates. Then Jane and I went forward and knelt at the rail. Finally, in the last group gathered round the table, was one of my criminal clients, who had pleaded guilty to a charge the previous week. When we had last been together on the previous Tuesday, in Newton Abbot Magistrates' Court, we all had different roles from the Magistrate, who was referred to as “Your Worship” or “Sir” to my client who was the “Defendant” and me in between! Yet, here, as we knelt at the Lord's Table, we were all welcome to share in the Lord's Supper. We were all equal and we were all equally loved by God.

Bread is broken during the Passover, but only a little is eaten because as slaves, they did not have enough to eat in Egypt. Jesus takes the broken bread and uses it to symbolise his own broken body. Then, he takes the wine and it becomes his blood shed for us. This is the new covenant. The old covenant created a relationship with God, which was based on the Law and obedience to the Law. The new covenant creates a new relationship with God, which is dependent on the blood which Jesus will shed for us, out of love for us. It creates a new relationship, which is based on love.

Jesus takes the bread and wine of the Passover and gives them new meaning as he uses them to refer to his death on the cross. Jesus knew that we, his followers, would go on sharing the meal through the centuries in remembrance of him. The meal would and still does change lives as we eat bread and drink wine knowing that we rely on the death of Jesus to give us life. It keeps us focussed on Jesus and his amazing love for us. It is a sign of faith, as we know that we can trust in Jesus, who died for us, in all things. It is a sign of hope as after the suffering and death of Jesus comes new life and resurrection. It is a sign of love, as it demonstrates how Jesus' love for us knows no limits. Jesus knew he would die, but also had hope, as he knew that he would rise and drink again the fruit of the cup in the kingdom of God.



Jesus and his friends sang a hymn. The Passover Supper ends with the singing of the Hallel, which consists of Psalms 114 or 115 to Psalm 118. During the Hallel, people sing of the wonderful acts of God at the exodus; of his greatness of God; thanksgiving for all all the world to worship and praise God. Psalm 118 includes those wonderful words of the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever. This is the day that the Lord has made...



We remember Jesus' sacrifice for us with the bread and wine. They are a powerful reminder of all that Jesus has done for us. Eating the bread and drinking the wine are so much more powerful than just words of explanation and interpretation. The Lord's Supper is special to each one of us as we've been able to make it our own, to draw life and

strength from, as we've knelt to receive the elements and meet the risen Jesus. The actions; the taking, the blessing, the breaking and the giving of bread; the taking, the blessing and the giving of the cup, cannot be contained or controlled. In his commentary on the passage from Mark, Tom Wright says that we cannot control the effects of sharing the Sacrament just as we cannot cage in a tiger!

The actions are vitally important as they say it all, but some words are necessary. Jesus used the Passover story to link the bread and wine to the death he would shortly die, and to the coming of the kingdom of God that would be brought about by that death. Jesus uses this meal to help his followers understand his death, but he also lets the actions do its freedom work in their lives, in our lives and in the world as we do not know how the bread and the wine will effect us and inspire us. We do not know how God will use them and draw close to us through them.

Tom Wright says, "(The Last Supper) drew to a head the kingdom-actions – eg the feastings, (the generous responses to people in need) – and the kingdom-teaching of his whole public career...this is how the kingdom will come." The kingdom will come through love, forgiveness, generous giving, service, brokenness and sacrifice, which are all the way of Jesus. Mark shows us example after example in his Gospel as he sets out Jesus' ministry and life here on earth. In the last Passover hymn, Psalm 118, we are reminded that Jesus is the rejected stone which becomes the cornerstone; the foundation of the Christian life and the Church.

The Lord's Supper helps us remember what is at the centre of our faith and it is also a means of grace, a way through which people can discover the love of Jesus. John Wesley was a great believer in the Sacrament being a means of grace. I was at synod once when I heard a minister give her testimony before asking to "sit down", which is the Methodist way of asking to retire! She said that she became a Christian when she was at Parade Service with her daughter, who was in the church's Brownie pack. She had only ever been to church a few times before at previous Parade Services. On one occasion, the service included Holy Communion and when the minister invited everyone to the Lord's Table, she found herself kneeling at the communion rail committing her life to Jesus who loved her. The rest was history! She came to know Jesus through what John Wesley referred to as an Open Table. The Sacrament was for her, a means of grace.

Sadly different branches of the church approach the Lord's Supper in different ways and some think Communion is only for signed up members. The disciples didn't know what was happening when Jesus gave the Passover a new significance. They all went on to fail Jesus. One betrayed him; another denied him; and they ran away. Only John came back and stood at the foot of the cross. The breaking of bread and the taking of wine became for them, except Judas, a vital part of their fellowship and lives as the followers of Jesus. It was clearly an important part of every Christians' way of life by the time Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, which is the earliest written record we have of the Sacrament. It was so important, that Paul quotes Jesus, which is something which he only does on one other occasion.

I wonder how many people have said to you, that they do not go to church because they are not good enough. I know that I would never go through church doors if I waited until I was good enough to do so. It is the same with the Sacrament of Holy Communion, we take bread and wine, not because we are good enough or deserve it. We have done nothing, and never will be able, to earn God's love. It is freely and generously given to us as God is abounding in love. We take bread and wine, because we need it to remember what Jesus has done for us and ask for forgiveness; to give thanks for Jesus' sacrifice, our forgiveness and our salvation, knowing that he gives us hope; and to share the elements with other followers of Jesus, as part of the body of Christ, knowing that we can trust Jesus with everything as we follow him.

The taking of bread and wine is also a way through which God encourages, comforts and speaks to us. I was once in a group of people when a lady of colour told how she was once arrested during a peaceful anti-apartheid demonstration in South Africa. She was held in a police cell with a number of other women. When they were given something to eat, they saved some bread and water for Holy Communion. They were terrified about the interrogation to come. They prayed,

broke bread and shared it and the water amongst themselves in remembrance of Jesus. The sharing in the Lord's Supper did not stop the abuse, but it brought them comfort and strength from knowing Jesus loved them and was with them.

Sharing in the Lord's Supper is so powerful, but we often cannot explain why. It is part of the mystery of God that he speaks to us and moves us in unpredictable ways through the taking, blessing, breaking and sharing of bread and wine. Whether we are in a cathedral, a country chapel, an ancient church, a room, at a dining-room table, round a hospital bed or on the grass at a Christian gathering such as Greenbelt, God comes to us in unexpected ways. Jane, Thomas, Hannah and I enjoy going to Greenbelt, which is an annual Christian Festival, which takes place over the August Bank Holiday weekend. One of the highlights is when everyone meets for Sunday worship. Thousands gather in and around the big top for the service, which always ends with Holy Communion. Everyone is invited to get into pods of about twelve people. Each pod is given a bag with a bread roll, a small bottle of wine and a plastic cup. Sometimes you are with friends, but usually you are sharing with strangers. Over the years we have broken bread and taken wine with people from all over the country from different denominations and none. One year we were in a group with deaf children and one of their leaders was signing the service for them. Another year we got to know some bikers from Manchester. Everyone is included and all are welcome at the Lord's Supper. It is like the feeding of the five thousand and a foretaste of the heavenly banquet for all people.



Holy Communion is a mystery and we will never fully understand what happens when we receive bread and wine. However, we keep on celebrating and sharing the Lord's Supper until we eat and drink at the heavenly banquet, which is prepared for all people. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession by Matthew Ramsden, who is a Local Preacher in the Bolton Methodist Circuit



We come to the part of our worship now as we pray for others and ourselves. As we do so, I invite you to think about each specific focus in turn and end with "The Lord hears our prayer". "Thanks be to God".

We pray for God's world.

As we pray for God's world, we are mindful that we have not been wise, loving stewards of it. We have been greedy and selfish, rather than focusing on the beauty and wonder, and encouraging flourishing.

We pray for world rulers, that they would rule with truth and justice, mercy and grace and that they would remember that all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Jesus Christ.

Take a moment in silent prayer to pray for God's world and world rulers.

The Lord hears our prayer. Thanks be to God.

We pray for God's church.

We pray for the church worldwide, that we would unite in the common goal to worship and serve God together in a spirit of unity and holiness.

We pray for the church where we are and in a moment of quiet, we offer up to God our prayers for our church.

The Lord hears our prayer. Thanks be to God.

We take time now to pray for those who are known to us. We pray for those who are known to us that are going through times of trial that they would know God's peace and comfort. We pray for

those going through times of joy, that they would know Your love and not take this time for granted.

We pray also for ourselves, and I invite you to spend some time in prayer to God for yourself.

The Lord hears our prayer. Thanks be to God.

Amen.

Holy Communion



Hymn: StF 588 I Come with Joy, a Child of God (*Sing, read, pray, proclaim the words*)

Brian Wren (b.1936)

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The Blessing

And the blessing of God,
the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
remain with us now and always. Amen.

Let us go in peace in the power of the Spirit
to live and work to God's praise and glory.

Thanks be to God. Amen.



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