

## THE BRIDE VALLEY CHURCHES:

### Telephone Service for Sunday 10 July 2022 – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity

The service can be accessed by phone on Sunday morning on **01308 293062**.

Welcome to this act of worship for the Bride Valley Benefice for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity, which has been put together by Liz Howlett and draws on liturgy from the Iona Community.

O God, you summon the day to dawn; you teach the morning to waken the earth.

**Great is your name, great is your love.**

For you the valleys will sing for joy, the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

**Great is your name, great is your love.**

To you the monarchs of earth shall bow, the poor and the persecuted shall shout for joy:

**Great is your name, great is your love.**

Your love and justice shall last for ever, fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise.

**Great is your name, great is your love.**

#### *Hymn: Will you come and follow me*

1 Will you come and follow me

if I but call your name?

Will you go where you don't know

and never be the same?

Will you let my love be shown,

will you let my name be known,

will you let my life be grown,

in you and you in me?

2 Will you leave yourself behind

if I but call your name?

Will you care for cruel and kind

and never be the same?

Will you risk the hostile stare

should your life attract or scare?

Will you let me answer prayer

in you and you in me?

3 Will you let the blinded see

if I but call your name?

Will you set the prisoners free

and never be the same?

Will you kiss the leper clean,

and do such as this unseen,

and admit to what I mean

in you and you in me?

4 Will you love the 'you' you hide

if I but call your name?

Will you quell the fear inside

and never be the same?

Will you use the faith you've found

to reshape the world around,

through my sight and touch and sound

in you and you in me?

5 Lord, your summons echoes true

when you but call my name.

Let me turn and follow you

and never be the same.

In your company I'll go

where your love and footsteps show.

Thus I'll move and live and grow

in you and you in me.

*John L Bell (born 1949) and Graham Maule (1958-2019) © 1987 WGRG, c/o Iona Community, 21 Carlton Court, Glasgow, G5 9JP, Scotland. [www.wildgoose.scot](http://www.wildgoose.scot) CCLI Licence 2370586*

#### *Prayer of Confession and Absolution*

In the beauty of the earth, in the silence of our hearts, in the community of your church, in all acts of grace and kindness, in forgiving from the heart and in worship from the soul, your Spirit confirms the truth in which we seek to live.

If knowing this, we have failed to love you, our Maker, been hesitant to follow your Son, and suspected the power of your Spirit, Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

If we have desired comfort more than devotion and if we have satisfied our wants more than we have served your will, Christ have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

If we have limited our company to those like us and if we have restricted our conversation to matters of no consequence, Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

May the God of love bring us back to himself, forgive us our sins, and assure us of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Gracious Father, by the obedience of Jesus you brought salvation to our wayward world: draw us into harmony with your will, that we may find all things restored in him, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

**First Reading: Colossians 1: 1 - 14**

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people— the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

**Gospel Reading: Luke 10: 25 - 37**

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, "Love your neighbour as yourself." "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' "Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

*Reflection*

**Who do you think you are? Who do I think I am?**

When one of my sons was in the top year of junior school, he found his teacher rather challenging. It was only when he was in her class that he would regularly come home and say, 'You'll never guess what Mrs Soandso said today!' He would then recount to me whatever supposedly outrageous statement she had made! She made a real impact on at least one of the pupils in her class – he probably still remembers some of her sayings to this day! I was reminded of this when reflecting on today's gospel reading from Luke. One of the themes that always strikes me in Luke's gospel in particular is the way in which Jesus upturns the supposed norms of life through what he says and does. It is as if the kingdom that Jesus talks about so much, the kingdom of God, is an upside down kingdom. If you think you are 'somebody' because of your position or importance, watch out, because you may find yourself at the bottom in God's upside down world. But also, if you assume that you are less valuable in God's eyes because of your background, or lack of importance in your community, then watch out, because you could be in for a pleasant surprise!

It's in Luke's gospel where we see this in Jesus' parable about the pharisee and the publican going up to the temple to pray – the assumption in the audience (and we can imagine both pharisees and publicans – tax collectors – listening in with bated breath) – the assumption would be that the pharisee is the more upright, law-abiding person in the community, in comparison with a despised publican and therefore the pharisee is the one who will surely come out at

the end of the parable more justified by God. Of course we know from hearing this parable many times that the opposite is true! It is the publican whom Jesus encourages his hearers to imitate because he acknowledges his frailty and throws himself on God's mercy. A surprising turnaround. We can imagine the gasps of surprise in that first group of hearers.

Then, again in Luke, there is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the beggar at his gate. Once again we can think of the listeners gathering round, some of them comfortably off and others begging in the street and the assumption likely held by all would be this – the rich man has been clearly blessed by God in this life with wealth and luxury, therefore he is bound to be in the better place after death. We know however, that Jesus wrong foots his hearers yet again! Imagine the stunned shock-waves rippling through that audience!

When I reflect on these stories, they suggest to me that Jesus senses that part of his call from God is to encourage the people around him to question. He hasn't come to bless people's unthinking prejudices. He has come to question the assumptions they live with about who they are, about who others are, about what is really, deeply important about this earthly life. He wants his audience to wake up, and to take the commandment to love others as themselves completely seriously. For Jesus, this kind of challenging love was not a pipe dream – this is the way forward. And for this to happen, their prejudices about themselves and other people who are different cannot remain intact. I guess for that to happen for any of us, it takes shock tactics to stir us up and really make us question our deep seated assumptions.

And today's gospel reading has a similar dynamic at work. This time Jesus shines his spotlight on attitudes about foreigners. But the Samaritans were foreigners with a twist – they couldn't be conveniently parked with, say the Romans, who were clearly pagans, worshipping many gods. The Samaritans were also, like the Jews, understood to be descended from Jacob's twelve sons in the distant past and once upon a time the Samaritans and the Judaeans were all part of the same kingdom ruled by David and then Solomon. But they had separated into different nations after that and through the centuries the bad feelings between Judaeans and Samaritans became legendary and were passed down from one generation to another. It's like this – because they were closer – almost kin – the bad feeling was worse between them. 'They' didn't do things in the right ways – for example, the Samaritans had their own temple, not in Jerusalem – so they didn't worship God properly. Thus in this parable, Jesus gives us a stark contrast – on the one hand, we have two men, the priest and the levite, who would be assumed to be nearer to God, 'holier' because they were linked to the Jerusalem temple. This temple was believed to be the holiest part of the land (and indeed the world) because this was where the presence of God was on earth – it was 'God's house'. On the other hand, we have a member of a despised, supposedly inferior, definitely less holy, neighbouring group. And it is his, the outsider's, attitude and actions towards the injured man which are held up by Jesus for others to imitate. He is the one who is loving his neighbour as himself.

We can't totally recapture the original shocking impact of this parable on its first hearers. They never knew what Jesus was going to say next! You can imagine folks going home and saying – you will never guess what came out of his mouth today! He is outrageous in what he says! We are handicapped because most of us will have heard this parable so many times before and we know exactly what punchline is coming. We also are at a disadvantage because we don't have exactly the same religious and cultural assumptions as Jesus' audience. However, I think we can still enable this parable to do its work on us by asking honest, probing questions of ourselves... Who might be the 'despised Samaritans' for us today? Are they those who worship differently, or have a completely different faith and culture, or maybe don't worship at all? Or perhaps the people we struggle with the most are closer to home - those relations you never see eye to eye with and perhaps secretly wish you didn't have, or the neighbours about whom you can't think of a good word to say. Where do our prejudices lie – for we all have them – and how can we see those who are different from us as God sees them? How can we see ourselves as God sees us? How can we operate out of a place of love rather than fear and hatred towards ourselves and others? That I believe is a key question and indeed a key calling for those who seek to follow Christ. And these are vital questions for us all as human beings and the nations we live in. We can see fear of the other at work driving war in eastern Europe; we have seen hatred lead to deaths and huge numbers of refugees driven from their homes across the world. Let us pray, not only that our own prejudices may be upturned, but that across the world, love for self and the other may overcome fear and hatred. Amen.

### *Hymn O Jesus, I have promised*

1 O Jesus, I have promised  
to serve thee to the end;  
be thou for ever near me,  
my Master and my Friend:

I shall not fear the battle  
if thou art by my side,  
nor wander from the pathway  
if thou wilt be my guide.

2 O let me hear thee speaking  
in accents clear and still,  
above the storms of passion,  
the murmurs of self-will;  
O speak to reassure me,  
to hasten or control;  
O speak, and make me listen,  
thou guardian of my soul.

3 O Jesus, thou hast promised  
to all who follow thee,  
that where thou art in glory  
there shall thy servant be;  
and, Jesus, I have promised

to serve thee to the end:  
O give me grace to follow,  
my Master and my Friend.

4 O let me see thy foot-marks,  
and in them plant mine own;  
my hope to follow duly  
is in thy strength alone:  
O guide me, call me, draw me,  
uphold me to the end;  
and then in heaven receive me,  
my Saviour and my Friend.

*John Ernest Bode (1816-1874) (Public Domain)*

### *Prayers:*

Let us pray: May it not be long, Lord...

May it not be long, Lord, before the world we pray for and the world we inhabit are one.

May it not be long before the earth no longer suffers through human selfishness, so that the valleys can sing again, the meadows laugh and barren places burst into bloom. **May it not be long.**

May it not be long, Lord, before the domination of wealth over want, male over female, white over black, the privileged over the poor, be facts of history, not facts of life. **May it not be long.**

May it not be long, Lord, before spears are turned into pruning forks and all the peoples of the world are able to live in peace and harmony with one another. **May it not be long.**

May it not be long, Lord, before we vacate the places of fear and anxiety and find wells of hope and peace, deeper than shallow pools of optimism. **May it not be long.**

### *The Lord's Prayer*

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**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**

### *Closing Responses*

From where we are, to where you need us, **Jesus, now lead on.**

From the familiarity of what we know to the wonder of what you will reveal, **Jesus, now lead on.**

To transform the fabric of this world until it resembles the shape of your kingdom, **Jesus, now lead on.**

Because good things have been prepared for those who love God, **Jesus, now lead on.**

### *Blessing*

May God give to you and to all those whom you love God's comfort and peace and light and joy, in this world and the next; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you now and always. **Amen.**

### *Hymn: Go forth and tell*

1 Go forth and tell! O church of God, awake!  
God's saving news to all the nations take;  
proclaim Christ Jesus, saviour, Lord, and king,  
that all the world his glorious praise may sing.

2 Go forth and tell! God's love embraces all;  
he will in grace respond to all who call:  
how shall they call if they have never heard  
the gracious invitation of his word?

*James E Seddon (1915-1983) © The Representatives of the late James Edward Seddon/Admin by The Jubilate Group, 4 Thorne Park Road, Torquay, TQ2 6RX, UK. Used by permission. CCLI Licence 2370586*

3 Go forth and tell! The doors are open wide:  
share God's good gifts-let no one be denied;  
live out your life as Christ your Lord shall choose,  
your ransomed powers for his sole glory use.

4 Go forth and tell! O church of God, arise!  
go in the strength which Christ your Lord supplies;  
go till all nations his great name adore  
and serve him, Lord and king for evermore.

*Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England, is copyright The Archbishop's Council (2000).*

*A Wee Worship Book: Fifth Incarnation, is copyright The Wild Goose Resource Group (2015).*