

Sunday 21st March 2021 - Rev. Bethany Willers

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

O Lord, I come to you this day, to hear your word and to rejoice in your presence in my life, now, and always.

Hymn: [Great is Thy Faithfulness](#) (Singing the Faith 51)

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;
as thou hast been thou for ever wilt be:

*Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided.
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.*

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love:

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Thomas O. Chisholm (1866-1960)

Let us pray together

O God I give thanks to you this day for your great faithfulness.

May I match your faithfulness with my own.

You have sustained me in times of trouble, and carried me when I could not bear my own weight.

Thank you for the gift of your love and grace, shown to us in Jesus Christ.

I seek to give my life to you in service and to love others as you have first loved me.

May I do all these things with the help of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today's Reading from the Old Testament [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#)

Today's Gospel Reading: John 12:20-33

Time to Reflect

I love reading multiple translations of a passage to help me make sense of what I am reading. One of my favorites is one called "The Message" - which translates scripture into modern-day English. Here is how The Message interprets John 12:24-25:

"Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over. In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you'll have it forever, real and eternal."

It's hard to believe, but it has been over a year now since the pandemic began and we all had to change how we go about living our lives. We changed how we work, see family and friends, travel, and worship, among many other things. It has been hard, and awful, and at times, devastating. Many of us wanted, instead, to cling to what life had been before - and many of us are still longing to go back, for life to return to "normal" - whatever that was. We liked being the grain of wheat and we want to continue being the grain of wheat if we can.

But perhaps we have been given a chance to do what Jesus calls us to do in this passage - to give up our lives for something new, for something more closely resembling the kingdom of God. This time of struggle has made us get more creative about caring for our neighbor. At times it has opened our eyes to neighbors who were in need right under our noses before. If we take this time of continued upheaval to let go of the life we had before, and be reckless in our love, perhaps something new will flourish that looks more like what God wants for us.

Is God calling you to be more than just a grain of wheat? How has God cared for you and nurtured you in this time of being buried? Where have you seen signs of new life and new growth spring forth? Are there areas of your life you need to tend to? Are there areas of your life you need to let go of and realize that you cannot or should not go back to?

May we ponder all of these things in our hearts with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

Loving and gracious God,

We lift our prayers to you this morning, knowing that you hear all of our prayers, whether spoken or unspoken, for you know all that is on our hearts and minds.

We pray this day for the world... for the distribution of the vaccine, for people affected by war or natural disaster...

We pray this day for our nation... for the NHS and all who work hard to care for people within it, for our leaders, for all the people as we find new ways to live in community with one another...

We pray this day for our church... that we might shine with the light of Christ in the world, that others will come to know him through our actions, help us to be the hands and feet of Jesus...

We pray this day for our own concerns...

Oh God, let us pray now as Jesus taught us to pray...

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn to listen to: ["You say"](#)

A prayer of blessing

Lord, may I be as a grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies so I can rise up to new life in Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Original Materials by Rev. Bethany Willers

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