

Introduction

Hello, my name is Helen Watson and I'm one of the Methodist Local Preachers in the Berkshire and Hampshire Borders Circuit. I'm very pleased to be with you today.

Call to Worship¹ The Psalmist says: Lord, I will praise you with all my heart. I will praise you. I will praise your name, because you are loving and faithful.

Hymn STF6 Father, we love you, we worship and adore you, glorify your name in all the earth

1 Father, we love you,
we worship and adore you :
glorify your name
in all the earth.

Glorify your name,
glorify your name,
glorify your name,
in all the earth.

2 Jesus, we love you,
we worship and adore you :
glorify your name
in all the earth.

Glorify your name,
glorify your name,
glorify your name,
in all the earth.

3 Spirit, we love you,
we worship and adore you :
glorify your name
in all the earth.

Glorify your name,
glorify your name,
glorify your name,
in all the earth.

Donna Adkins (b. 1940)

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Prayer and Lords Prayer

Let us pray - Lord God, whatever age we are, you show us your love and compassion. Whether we are new in the faith or have known you more years than we care to remember, you are there for us.

You show your mercy to us and to all those around us. We bow to you, our powerful God, for whom nothing is impossible.

Thank you, Lord, for the many blessings you have created. We remember the beauty of this world, the companionship of nature – the trees, flowers, fields and rivers. We bless you and thank you for the companionship of animals, of fish, of birds, and of all living things.

And in particular, we bless you and thank you for those people with whom we share our lives.

We bless you and thank you that Jesus came to earth, to live as we live, to die and to rise again to bring us into your kingdom. We don't deserve all these things, but we know that you give them freely to each one of us.

Thank you, Lord, and bless you.

W@H 12th July 2026

Lord Jesus, forgive those times when our hearts have been fixed on ourselves and not on the kingdom of heaven.

Forgive us our ingratitude when we turn away from you.

Forgive us our hardheartedness when we reject the needs of others.

Forgive us when we fail to spend time with you.

Lord, in your great mercy, forgive us all our sins and lead us into everlasting life.

We know that when we come to you with contrite hearts you are always ready to forgive and to say, 'I love you. I forgive you. Go in peace.

Amen.

We say together the Lord's prayer.

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 today 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.

Reading¹ John7: 14 – 19

Jesus Teaches at the Feast

Jesus did nothing until halfway through the Feast. Then he went up to the temple courtyard and began to teach.

The Jews were amazed. They asked, "How did this man learn so much without studying?"

Jesus answered, "What I teach is not my own. It comes from the One who sent me.

Anyone who chooses to do what God wants him to do will find out whether my teaching comes from God or from me.

Someone who speaks on his own does it to get honour for himself. But someone who works for the honour of the One who sent him is truthful. There is nothing false about him.

"Didn't Moses give you the law? But not one of you keeps the law".

Reflection

Some time ago my husband and I committed to looking after our 3-year-old grandson one day a week. He was a lively little lad and loved to go out for a walk with us. He wanted to explore the world; he wanted to run and jump and climb on walls. He wanted freedom!

But because of where he lived, he could not have complete freedom. For his own safety there were certain rules that he had to follow! One was that we could only cross a road if there was a crossing with a little green man. When the green man showed, we were allowed to cross to the other side. The rule of the green man was necessary for his safety.

In our Christian life, our church life, we want what our grandson wanted. We want to explore our faith, we want to know God better, we want to have freedom to do all these things. And God wants that too! But he has given us rules to follow and following them will make our relationship with God much better.

At the time that Jesus went to the popular feast of the Tabernacles, he was regarded as a danger by the Jewish authorities. It was surprising to some that he would show himself so openly. But he spoke up loudly, accusing the authorities of not obeying their own rules. They didn't like this, of course, and they wondered where his authority came from, as he had no formal teaching or training.

Jesus said that his authority came from God and that anyone who wanted to do God's will would see that. His authority was based on following God's law. He said that the purpose of the law of God was to strengthen and uphold the people and to guide them in bringing God into every part of their lives.

He accused the authorities of only obeying some parts of the law, the bits that suited them. That was not popular!

At first sight the word obedience has a threat to it. Obey the rules or something bad will happen, obey or you are a bad person, untrustworthy, and not one of us! We need not obey everything we are asked to do, but some rules are there for our own safety! The little green man made it possible for our grandson to cross the road safely.

In Matthew's gospel, Jesus said 'Love your God with all your heart and soul and mind and love your neighbour as yourself.' Following these commandments will keep us close to him and will bring us safely into his Kingdom.

Amen

Hymn STF495

Dear Lord and Father of mankind, forgive our foolish ways

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Dear Lord and Father of mankind
forgive our foolish ways ;
reclothe us in our rightful mind ;
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence, praise. | the tender whisper of thy call,
as noiseless let thy blessing fall
as fell thy manna down. |
| 2 In simple trust like theirs who heard
beside the Syrian sea
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word
rise up and follow thee. | 5 Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease ;
take from our souls the strain and
stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace. |
| 3 O sabbath rest by Galilee !
O calm of hills above,
where Jesus knelt to share with thee
the silence of eternity,
interpreted by love ! | 6 Breathe through the heats of our
desire
thy coolness and thy balm ;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire ;
speak through the earthquake, wind,
and fire,
O still small voice of calm ! |
| 4 With that deep hush subduing all
our words and works that drown | |

John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892)

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Prayers of intercession

God chose what is folly in the world's eyes, to save the world:

Let us pray for this world for which Christ died, the Church to which he has sent his Spirit, and the individuals he calls to respond to his cross.

Lord, we thank you for our world and the people in it. We pray today for all the people living here. We pray for those who govern the different countries and for the choices they make as they try to rule fairly. We pray that they may be guided by you in the ways that they deal with the problems they face and the decisions they make.

We pray also for the people not in government, those who feel safe in their land and those who do not. We pray for those who suffer injustice and those who are treated unfairly.

May they all come to realise that you are with them, even when things seem to be going wrong or are hopeless.

We pray for the justice systems in different countries where police, judges and juries make decisions about people's futures. May they know your justice and your fairness in what they decide.

We pray for our local councillors, making choices of how to spend money wisely to benefit the community they serve. Guide their hand as they spend. Help them to listen to what the people say and to act according to that will.

We pray for the people we know who are sick in body or in mind; for those who are in trouble for whatever reason, those who are in despair, for the bereaved and for those who see no way to turn. Help them to realise that you care about them and are ready and willing to heal, comfort and support. They just need to turn to you.

Finally, Lord, we pray for ourselves. Help us to know that you are with us every day, even when things are difficult. Give us your love and your peace as we go through our lives.

Lord, we ask all these prayers in the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen

Hymn STF465

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
pilgrim through this barren land ;
I am weak, but thou art mighty ;
hold me with thy powerful hand :
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore ;
feed me now and evermore.</p> <p>2 Open thou the crystal fountain
whence the healing stream shall
flow ;
let the fiery, cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through :</p> | <p>strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield ;
be thou still my strength and shield.</p> <p>3 When I tread the verge of Jordan
bid my anxious fears subside ;
death of death, and hell's
destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side :
songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee ;
I will ever give to thee.</p> |
|---|---|

William Williams (1717–1791)

translated by Peter Williams (1727–1796)

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Blessing

May the God of love fill you with all joy and peace and may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you and with all those you love now and forever.

Amen

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