

## Prayers of Intercession, Petition and Dedication

Almighty God, we bring our concerns to you in prayer. We pray for your world-wide church, asking especially for your blessing as countless of your people continue to find new ways to worship in the current emergency and work out how they can safely re-open premises.

We pray for your world. We bring before you our concerns about situations in places such as Belarus and Hong Kong, plus other places which may not currently be in the news headlines but are no less important. We pray for world leaders, that they may be inspired less by parochial matters than wider ones. We pray, too, for our own country, the Prime Minister and Cabinet Members, some of who carry a heavy responsibility for taking the country forward at this difficult time.

We remember, too, the places in which we live, work and see our families and friends. Even now, in this period when it's harder to interact socially face-to-face, we ask your blessing on our efforts to care for those in need. May we prayerfully support those public bodies who are leading the provision of help in our own localities. We remember in our prayers those who are in poor physical or mental health and give thanks to those who look after them. We remember those suffering in other ways, especially those who mourn the deaths of family members and friends from Covid-19.

And we pray for ourselves. At the start of the new Methodist Year, we pray that we shall develop our spiritual selves and learn always to serve our communities better. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

### Hymn [Captain of Israel's Host, StF 459/H&P 62](#)

May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

This worship sheet was created by Ian Warburton, Local Preacher

## Darlington District Worship

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2020



### Call to Worship

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you<sup>[2]</sup> free from the law of sin and of death

*(Romans 8, v 1-2, NRSVA)*

### Hymn [Jesus is Lord! StF 353/H&P 260](#)

### Prayers of Adoration, Thanksgiving and Confession

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for everything that you've done and continue to do for us. You loved us so dearly that you sent your son Jesus Christ to live amongst us, teach us, love us and set us a wonderful example. We thank you so much that he died for us, rose again and now sits at your right hand, as he continues to love us and be with us. We long to love you, too, Lord. Help us to learn more about you and work out how we can serve you better.

But we're sorry that we haven't always behaved as your followers as our lives have continued. We've paid too little attention to what we could learn from you and have neglected to love and serve our neighbours as well as we might have done. Too often we've paid lip service only to your goodness and have gone our way rather than yours. We humbly ask your forgiveness and we pray that you will help us to turn our lives round, that from here on we may truly be said to be your servants. We ask these things in the name of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

### The Lord's Prayer

## **Bible Reading: Matthew 18: 15-20**

### **Teaching About the Kingdom**

I spent most of my working life in administration posts within the NHS and the Local Authority but, for about 12 to 18 months, I had a complete change and worked as a market research interviewer. I worked for a good company, which treated its interviewers very well, but in my early days I didn't realise that there was a dress code.

Thus, one January Saturday I completed a series of street interviews in very poor weather, with gales and sleet never far away. Having checked the forecast, I decided to dress for the weather and went to the interview area wearing T shirt, jeans and trainers.

Nothing was said on the day but, on the following Monday, I received a phone call from the supervisor for whom I'd been working on the Saturday. She informed me gently but firmly that we were expected to attend jobs in smart business wear. I noted the information and didn't transgress again but I appreciated the discreet and kindly way in which she had made her point.

Delivering a criticism in a loving and constructive way can be tricky and I wouldn't say that I've always got it right. The Lectionary Gospel reading for today has a bit to say to us through the words of Jesus about how to react when issuing a criticism seems to be unavoidable.

First of all, if we need to do this, we should if at all see the person alone. In these days of mass communications, it's surely better to see the person than dealing with an issue by writing a letter or, in a modern setting, relying on an email or Facebook message. Then, if that doesn't resolve the issue, the presence of a few carefully-selected people at any second meeting might be a tremendous help, not because they want to enjoy the gossip-potential but more that the calm, wise and loving presence of a few people not personally over-involved might act as a way of cooling tempers if this is needed.

Finally, if necessary, there may be a need to involve the whole fellowship.

Should that still not resolve the issue, then, Jesus says, the person should be treated as though he/she is a pagan or tax collector. This is at first sight a bit odd, as Jesus was known to befriend and pray for those whom society might regard as beyond the pale. Yet perhaps this is the whole point, that we should continue to pray for and, as far as possible, keep loving the person with whom there has been an issue.

I want also briefly to consider the last two verses of the Matthew reading. Verse 19 seems difficult to fathom, as we all know perfectly well that God doesn't always seem to grant something requested in a prayer by two or more people. What we may need to bear in mind is that the answer which God gives to prayers may well sometimes relate to what God knows we need more than to what we think that our needs are.

The words of verse 20 should give us some help in these strange times. This past week has seen us move into a new Methodist year. None of us could easily have foreseen twelve months ago the position that we and the rest of society would be in at the start of September 2020.

Yet, little as we would have wanted all the suffering that has attended the coronavirus outbreak, maybe some good will also come of what's happened. Whilst our churches have been closed, we've found new ways of worshipping by telephone and online. I imagine that some of these will still be in use well beyond the time when we can return to our church buildings. It's almost impossible to work out whether all of our small churches will re-open but we can be reassured that, whether we worship in large congregations, smaller fellowships or via the use of technology, Christ will always be with us.