

East Durham Methodist Circuit:

Online Service for 30th May 2021

compiled by Rev Alf Waite, Ashleigh Pritchard

Reader (video): Graeme Walton

Theme: Home

Call to worship:

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.

Hymn: Immortal, invisible, God only wise W. Chalmers Smith **StF 55 / H&P 9**

1. Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible, hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

2. Unresting, unchanging, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
Thy justice, like mountains, high soaring above
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

3. To all, life Thou givest, to both great and small;
In all life Thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
And wither and perish - but naught changeth Thee.

4. Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;
All praise we would render; oh, help us to see
'Tis only the splendour of light hideth Thee.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Confession

Dear God,

Dear Lord Jesus, we thank You for our homes, which You have graciously provided for us. Lord, we are aware that You had nowhere to lay Your head. You had no place that You could call Your home when You walked this earth. We are abundantly thankful that we have a place to call our own.

Lord, we are sorry that sometimes we become too comfortable in the solitude and warmth of our own homes. In our distraction, we do not hear the cries of the world. We are sorry that we cannot always break down the barriers that impede us from helping those who do not have a place to call home. Lord we are sorry when we take our homes and possessions for granted. We know that there are people who are not as fortunate as us and do not have a place to call home.

Forgive us for only acknowledging as our neighbours those who look, act, dress and live as we do and expand our definition to include all the oppressed, marginalised and

downtrodden of society. Let us all live out the commandment to love our neighbour as ourselves, pledging to eradicate hunger and homelessness.

Father, we know that our true home is in heaven and that You have prepared a place for us all there. Help us to keep the things of this life in their proper perspective. May we be wise and thankful for all that You have given us. We look forward to the day when You will bring us into that wonderful home that You have prepared for us in heaven. In Jesus' name,

Amen

Testimony: Leaving home / making a home Ashleigh

For many, leaving home to go to university is a life changing experience. As a young person, it is your first chance of freedom and being able to express yourself. Some people move hundreds of miles away from their friends and families and are only able to visit home a couple of times a year. I went to Northumbria University, around 15 miles away from home and visited home at least twice a week to see friends, family and attend church. I lived in three different student flats while I attended University, but none of them were ever my “home”.

When Chris and I had been dating for two and a half years he asked me to move in with him. Obviously, I was excited about taking the next step in our relationship, but a part of me felt sad to be leaving home for good. When I had lived away from home during my studies, I always knew that I would move back home, back to live with my family. Returning back to live in the area where my friends were and where my church is, and live in my house, the only house I had ever lived in.

I knew that moving in with Chris was the start of a new adventure and adjusted to living there. I moved my possessions into the house and we bought furnishings making the place “our home”. I got familiar with my new surroundings and was made to feel welcome by the neighbours. I slowly but surely started referring to my childhood home as “mam and dad’s house”, and my new house as my “home”. The day Layla was born and we brought her home from the hospital was the first day that Chris’s house truly felt like our family home. Despite having made a family home in South Shields, I still think of my mam and dad’s house in Houghton as my home too, and am lucky that I can still return “home” frequently to visit my friends, family and share worship.

Reading: Micah 4:1-4 New International Version

¹In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills and peoples will stream to it.

²Many nations will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.” The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

³He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

⁴Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree and no one will make them afraid, for the LORD Almighty has spoken.

1. The splendour of the King,
clothed in majesty;
let all the earth rejoice, all the earth rejoice.
He wraps himself in light
and darkness tries to hide,
and trembles at his voice, and trembles at his voice.

**How great is our God,
sing with me: how great is our God.
And all will see how great, how great is our God.**

2. And age to age He stands,
and time is in His hands;
beginning and the end, beginning and the end.
The Godhead, Three in One,
Father, Spirit, Son,
the Lion and the Lamb, the Lion and the Lamb,

How great is our God...

Name above all names, worthy of all praise;
my heart will sing: how great is our God.

How great is our God...

Reading:

Revelation 21:1-8

New International Version

¹ Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

⁶ He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. ⁸ But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.”

Reading: John 14:1-6.

¹ “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going.” ⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Hymn: **Going home, moving on Michael L. Forster (tune from Dvorak's New World) **StF 734****

1. Going home, moving on, through God's open door;
hush, my soul, have no fear, Christ has gone before.
Parting hurts, love protests, pain is not denied;
yet, in Christ, life and hope span the great divide.
Going home, moving on, through God's open door;
hush, my soul, have no fear, Christ has gone before,
Christ has gone before.

2. No more guilt, no more fear, all the past is healed:
broken dreams now restored, perfect grace revealed.
Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again:
death destroyed, life restored, love alone shall reign.
Going home, moving on, through God's open door;
hush, my soul, have no fear, Christ has gone before,
Christ has gone before.

Message:

Micah 4:1-4: **Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid for the LORD Almighty has spoken.**

Today is Trinity Sunday. Pondering that I thought about the fellowship that is seen in the Trinity's relationship, how comfortable they are with each other. What a good example they are to us. We often try to explain the Trinity when really, we should just marvel at it. They are at home with one another.

A good sidestep there, but not that much. God wants us to feel at home in him. We can over-complicate the Christian faith when it is just about finding our home in God. In the prophecy of Micah we read; **“Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid for the LORD Almighty has spoken.”** We will sit unafraid in our own home.

When Calls the Heart, a Canadian soap, tells the story of Elizabeth Thatcher, a young teacher accustomed to her high-society life but she leaves all that when she receives her first classroom assignment in Coal Valley, a small coal-mining town in Western Canada.

Obviously, that meant leaving all she knew behind her and starting a new life among new people. She soon makes herself at home, builds relationships and after an arduous journey, one special relationship. They say ‘Home is where the heart is’ and that might give us the best question for this message. Where is your heart?

I remember setting up my first home on my own and apart from a few clothes and books I had little else, yet slowly but surely, I eventually made it home with my own things. That was just a one-bedroom flat when I moved on it was into a four-bedroom house, I was amazed how I managed to fill that. Every room was set up for its purpose and I soon made my home there. There is a difference between a house and a home.

Fifteen months ago, I remember thinking how it would be nice to have some time in Ceres House, my home now. Time to just enjoy it and relax there, but I also knew it was a bit of a romantic dream, visiting people who have become housebound. I never thought I would be forced to stay home with the lockdowns. It was not as idyllic as I had hoped it would be because you think about all you could/should be doing. Working in an itinerant ministry I now have to start thinking about asking to 'sit down' which is what we call retirement in the Methodist Church. Where will home be in the future?

The reading in Micah is speaking to a displaced people who have moved away from their God and brought judgement on themselves. All is not lost though because chapters 4 and 5 speak of the promise of God for life to be restored. It maybe obscure language, 'Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree' but it is speaking of being at home and living in safety. For Micah's audience, that was Israel and Judah, they would go home and live in peace and prosper and they did eventually go back to the promised land.

Like all Old Testament prophecy, it can be read on different levels. A promise to the wayward people of its time, then forward to Jesus, where in Him all can find a place of safety and going on still further, for us today. We can find that place of safety by putting our trust in Him.

There are many people today who find it difficult to find those safe places. Those who have been displaced, having left their homes to find a new life or displaced out of fear. There are too many around the world. And there are others who live in their own homes but don't know what the next moment will bring because they live in fear of someone coming home or knocking on the door.

I have met so many people who have found, even in those situations, a tremendous source of peace. It is certainly not something we can drum up in ourselves. "It will work out in the end" will not do, nor will "if only I try harder." When the disciples were about to face a confusing period, Jesus prepared them for it by giving them peace. He speaks of preparing a home for them and coming back to take them there. Then one of those disciples, in the twilight years of his life, has a vision of the end times where God makes his home with us for eternity.

That is the thread of God's grace through the history of the human race. Life may throw us curve balls, but we can know that same peace. In Psalm 73 the Psalmist is so overcome by those curve balls he is ready to give up. He looks out into the world and sees those prospering who don't care about truth and certainly don't give God a thought. He wondered what the point was until he entered the presence of God (Ps.73:17), then he understood. When he found his home in God, life was in true perspective.

Where is your home, the fig tree or vine that you sit under? Where is your safe place? I grew up living in a large farmhouse with big rooms and only a coal fire in the living room for warmth which also heated the water for washing. Nothing in the bedrooms and a small stove in the kitchen. We had a three-piece suite placed around the fire in the living room and a rug on the floor. I remember feeling warm and safe as I played in front of the fire or

did my homework. It was surrounded by a big dark space but there in the centre it was safe.

For me that is an image of life and finding my relationship with God through Jesus brings me to a place of warmth and safety, whatever life may throw at me. That is what God wants for you and for all. Worship should remind us of this and set us up for the new week ahead with all its knowns and unknowns before us.

Remember the promise of Father God from the prophet and the work of God through Jesus the Son and the eternal vision given to John by the Holy Spirit, because they are more real than anything the world can offer. **Amen**

Hymn: Come let us sing of a wonderful love Robert Walmsley **StF 443 / H&P 691**

1. Come let us sing of a wonderful love,
tender and true;
out of the heart of the Father above,
streaming to me and to you:
wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

2. Jesus, the Saviour, this gospel to tell,
joyfully came;
came with the helpless and hopeless to
dwell,
sharing their sorrow and shame;
seeking the lost,
saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

3. Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;
why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
home! weary wanderer, home!
Wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

4. Come to my heart, O thou wonderful
love,
come and abide,
lifting my life till it rises above
envy and falsehood and pride:
seeking to be
lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

Prayers:

Response: Lord, pour out your Spirit **and make all things new.**

Loving Lord, when we look at the world, we see how so many people's lives are destroyed by violence. Lives torn apart by war, terrorism or through the breakup of relationships. As we pray for them to know peace and safety in their lives, we pray for those who have the power and influence to change things and that they will put effort into it.

Lord, pour out your Spirit **and make all things new.**

Loving Lord, there are so many issues in our country compounded by the pandemic; our health services overwhelmed, the lawlessness in society, the unequal opportunities at all levels of society, the disrespect of different cultures, genders, ages and individuals. Give to those who have power and influence to change things, the will to do so.

Lord, pour out your Spirit **and make all things new.**

Loving Lord, we pray for your church on earth as it operates in an increasingly secular society that offers temporary or false security in wealth, possessions and relationships. Give to your church freedom and power to live and share the truth.

Lord, pour out your Spirit **and make all things new.**

Loving Lord, in this age of concern for the future of creation and our part in the impending destruction. Give a clear voice to those with the wisdom to reveal the danger and a positive voice to those with the power and influence to change things.

Lord, pour out your Spirit **and make all things new.**

Loving Lord, we pray for those who are in our thoughts at this time, naming them before you We pray that you will move in their circumstances.

Lord, pour out your Spirit **and make all things new.**

Loving Lord, as we pray for ourselves, we pray for our homes that they will be places of peace and security.

Lord, pour out your Spirit **and make all things new.**

**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

Hymn: Trust and Obey

1. When we walk with the Lord
In the light of His word
What a glory He sheds on our way
While we do His good will
He abides with us still
And with all who will trust and obey

**Trust and obey
For there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus
But to trust and obey**

2. But we never can prove
The delights of His love
Until all on the altar we lay
For the favour He shows
For the joy He bestows
Are for them who will trust and obey

Trust and obey...

3. Then in fellowship sweet
We will sit at His feet
Or we'll walk by His side in the way
What He says we will do
Where He sends we will go
Never fear, only trust and obey

Trust and obey...

Blessing:

No matter who you are or what you have done. No matter where you are or what you are facing. No matter how you feel or whether you understand it. The truth is this: you can go in hope, joy and peace, for Christ has come. **Amen**

And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you and those you love now and always. **Amen**

