

**East Durham Methodist Circuit:**  
**On-line Service for Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

compiled by Judy Tasker

**Theme: Jesus' Great Reversal**

**Call to worship:**

Come before God, leave everything behind, and offer all that you have and all that you are to the Lord who loves us.

**Hymn: Jesus calls us here**     John L Bell and Graham Maule     **StF 28**

1. Jesus calls us here to meet him  
as, through word and song and prayer,  
we affirm God's promised presence  
where his people live and care.  
Praise the God who keeps his promise;  
praise the son who calls us friends;  
praise the spirit who, among us,  
to our hopes and fears attends.

3. Jesus calls us to each other,  
vastly different though we are;  
creed and colour, class and gender  
neither limit nor debar.  
Join the hand of friend and stranger;  
join the hands of age and youth;  
join the faithful and the doubter  
in their common search for youth.

2. Jesus calls us to confess him  
Word of life and Lord of all,  
sharer of our flesh and frailness,  
saving all who fail or fall.  
Tell his holy human story;  
Tell his tales that all may hear;  
Tell the world that Christ is glory  
Came to earth to meet us here.

**Prayers of Adoration and Confession:**

God of all, we see you in creation, so magnificent and wonderful, we are in awe of you.

God of all, we find you in Jesus, loving and just.

God of all, we are blessed by your Spirit, so powerful and gracious.

May we be transformed by you. May your love shine through us and may we share it with all those we meet.

Lord God, you speak to us in many ways. Help us to listen so that we may respond to your call, wherever and whenever it comes.

Forgive us when we are reluctant to follow; when we doubt that you will be with us.

Forgive us when we don't want to step out of our comfort zone.

Forgive us when we fail to speak up for what we know to be the right thing to do.

Fill us with your grace and mercy. Thank you, gracious, loving God, that you do indeed renew us and wipe away our wrongs and strengthen us to seek and to do your will.

In Jesus' name we pray

**Amen**

Let us now say **The Lord's Prayer** together:

**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**

**Reading:** Amos 5: 6 – 7; 10-15 New International Version

<sup>6</sup> Seek the LORD and live, or he will sweep through the tribes of Joseph like a fire; it will devour them, and Bethel will have no one to quench it. <sup>7</sup> There are those who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground.

<sup>10</sup> There are those who hate the one who upholds justice in court and detest the one who tells the truth. <sup>11</sup> You levy a straw tax on the poor and impose a tax on their grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine. <sup>12</sup> For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. There are those who oppress the innocent and take bribes and deprive the poor of justice in the courts. <sup>13</sup> Therefore the prudent keep quiet in such times, for the times are evil. <sup>14</sup> Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the LORD God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is. <sup>15</sup> Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the LORD God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.

**Reading:** Mark 10: 17-31 **The Rich and the Kingdom of God** New International Version

<sup>17</sup> As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>18</sup> "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good - except God alone. <sup>19</sup> You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honour your father and mother.' "

<sup>20</sup> "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." <sup>21</sup> Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." <sup>22</sup> At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

<sup>23</sup> Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" <sup>24</sup> The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

<sup>26</sup> The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?" <sup>27</sup> Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God." <sup>28</sup> Then Peter spoke up, "We have left everything to follow you!" <sup>29</sup> "Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers

or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel <sup>30</sup> will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields - along with persecutions - and in the age to come eternal life. <sup>31</sup> But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

**Hymn: Take my life and let it be**

Francis Ridley Havergal

**StF 566**

1. Take my life, and let it be  
consecrated, Lord, to thee;  
take my moments and my days,  
let them flow in ceaseless praise.

4. Take my silver and my gold,  
not a mite would I withhold;  
take my intellect, and use  
every power as thou shalt choose.

2. Take my hands, and let them move  
at the impulse of thy love;  
take my feet, and let them be  
swift and beautiful for thee.

5. Take my will, and make it thine;  
it shall be no longer mine;  
take my heart – it is thine own;  
it shall be thy royal throne.

3. Take my voice, and let me sing  
always, only, for my King;  
take my lips, and let them be  
filled with messages from thee.

6. Take my love; my Lord, I pour  
at thy feet its treasure – store;  
take myself and I will be  
ever only, all for thee.

**Message: The Great Reversal**

I expect many of you will have read some of the Mr Men books to your children, grandchildren, or someone else’s children. One of them is called ‘Mr Topsy-Turvy’.

‘Where on earth is she going with that?’ you may be asking yourselves! Well, that Mr Men book is full of things being the wrong way round; upside down! His house, his way of walking, his hat, his walking stick, all his belongings are upside down!

The last sentence from the reading from Mark’s gospel that we heard this morning got me thinking of that book! **‘But many who are first will be last, and the last first.’ (Mark 10:31)** Everything reversed. Everything topsy-turvy! Seemingly, completely upside-down thinking.

Chapter 10 is full of Jesus’ teachings. He and the disciples are travelling through Judea on their way up to Jerusalem. In the verses just before our Scripture passage this morning, there was the account of Jesus welcoming the children. Here we have similar teaching. It’s here that we read that children were brought to Jesus. The disciples rebuked those who brought them. In their day and in that culture (still the same today in some countries) children and especially girl children, are the least important of all. However, Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.’ (Mark 10:13-16) He took the children in his arms and blessed them.

Children - unimportant and insignificant, in that culture, but shown love and given an important place by Jesus. **But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.’**

**In God’s Topsy-Turvy, upside down kingdom, things are turned around, completely reversed, through God’s grace and love.**

We can’t calculate God’s Grace. It’s a gift. God’s values are upside-down values. They’re unlike how the world measures things.

The rich man is referred to as 'the rich young ruler' by Tom Wright in his commentary. He explains this by telling us that in Matthew's gospel he is referred to as young. Luke, in his gospel says that he was a ruler. All three writers obviously recognise this teaching of Jesus as being very important. So whoever this young man is, he urgently wants to take this opportunity of questioning Jesus. He comes quickly. Mark's gospel tells us that he ran to him. He shows Jesus respect as he came to Jesus and knelt before him – he fell on his knees. Perhaps he's listened to Jesus' teaching many times. But he's troubled. He really wants to find out from Jesus how he can have eternal life – life in God's kingdom.

Jesus lists some of the commandments. He says he's dutifully kept all of them. But, did you notice, Jesus first quoted commandment numbers six to nine, murder, adultery, theft, perjury, then added 'don't defraud'. Then he went back to honouring parents.

Jesus left out the first four about putting God first, not worshipping idols and not taking God's name in vane and honouring the Sabbath day. Then finally, he said greed or covetousness. So the man didn't say that he'd kept **all ten** commandments all his life!

I wonder if Jesus knew him, knew of his family? He knew that the man was wealthy. I'm sure that his clothes would be a give-away on that score! We know today, don't we, the difference between beautiful, fabric, uniquely styled, a perfect fit, and something bought from a cheap chain store!

We're told that Jesus looked on him with love. He knew that there were things in his life that he worshipped, regarded highly, felt they were so important to him - more important than God, maybe?

What the rich man needed to do was give away his wealth. He should sell his prized possessions and give to those who were in need and follow Jesus. He needed to put God first – above his love of an expensive, extravagant lifestyle. You see, religious teachers of that time saw wealth as a positive sign of God's approval. Jesus contradicted such ideas by teaching that wealth can actually be a barrier; keeping people out of the Kingdom of God. His teaching was in line with the Old Testament prophets. Prophets like Amos and Hosea.

We also read from the prophet Amos this morning, that God didn't want the false worship of the nation of Israel. He was prophesying around 780 BC. He concentrates on injustice. He was speaking out against the terrible social and religious corruption of the very affluent times, when Israel was at the height of its prosperity. He saw oppression of the poor, dishonest business, bribery in court and privilege bought with money. The wealthy Israelites were getting their luxuries at the expense of the poor. But Amos told them that God must be master over all of life, including business affairs. The nation didn't listen and they ended up in exile, in Babylon. It seems that the religious leaders and teachers of Jesus' day still hadn't learned from their prophets.

And now God has sent Jesus. Jesus is telling the same message. God's kingdom isn't just something that will happen somewhere in the future, or when we get to heaven. God's kingdom is where we let God rule. When we acknowledge that Jesus is Lord – God is Lord – when he rules in our hearts. When he is the most important thing in our lives; when he colours our life choices, these are signs that his kingdom is here. Topsy-turvy ways of looking at things – **'Many who are first will be last, and the last first.'**

Making those life choices may not be easy. The rich young ruler couldn't do it. His possessions were too important to him for him to give up. They were his idols. He worshipped them above worshipping God.

In our lives and the lives of our culture, our communities, there are things which many find difficult, hard to give up in changing our way of life to follow Jesus; to live in his upside down topsy-turvy way of thinking and doing. But, through God's grace, we can trust in him for his guidance, his encouragement, his help. As he showed the disciples, through his strange allegory, all things are possible with God.

So, what might Jesus be saying here about the way we treat those in need, or those at the back of the queue. For example, asylum seekers, refugees, people who need food banks, the homeless, and many more.

We read in some newspapers and hear criticism from many quarters about those who ask for help because of the situations they find themselves in through no fault of their own, simply by where or to whom they were born.

Giving aid to poorer countries, sending corona virus vaccines to places where a very small percentage of the country are vaccinated, cause some to complain. But God needs us to speak out for him. It's hard to stand out in the crowd and put forward a different point of view; a reversal of what the world may think, God's topsy-turvy thinking.

Jesus didn't say that following him would be easy. Our decisions may not be life threatening in order to follow Jesus, but they are very necessary. God needs us to bring in his kingdom.

In conclusion, I want to read a hymn written by John L. Bell and Graham Maule of the Iona Community.

### **Heaven shall not wait      StF 701**

1. Heaven shall not wait  
for the poor to lose their patience,  
the scorned to smile, the despised to  
find a friend:  
Jesus is Lord;  
he has championed the unwanted;  
in him injustice confronts its timely end.

2. Heaven shall not wait  
for the rich to share their fortunes,  
the proud to fall, the elite to tend the  
least:  
Jesus is Lord;  
he has shown the master's privilege –  
to kneel and wash servants' feet before  
they feast.

3. Heaven shall not wait  
For the dawn of great ideas,  
thoughts of compassion divorced from  
cries of pain:  
Jesus is Lord;  
he has married word and action;  
his cross and company make his  
purpose plain.

4. Heaven shall not wait  
for triumphant Hallelujahs,  
when earth has passed and we reach  
another shore:  
Jesus is Lord  
in our present imperfection;  
his power and love are for now, and  
then for evermore.

**Amen**

**Hymn:****Knowing you, Jesus**

Graham Kendrick

**StF 489**

1. All I once held dear,  
built my life upon,  
all this world reveres,  
and wars to own,  
all I once thought gain  
I have counted loss;  
spent and worthless now,  
compared to this.

**Knowing you, Jesus,  
knowing you,  
there is no greater thing.  
You're my all, you're the best'  
you're my joy, my righteousness,  
and I love you, Lord.**

2. Now my heart's desire  
is to know you more,  
to be found in you  
and known as yours.  
to possess by faith  
what I could not earn,  
all-surprising gift  
of righteousness.

**Knowing you, Jesus...**

3. Oh, to know the power  
of your risen life,  
and to know you in  
your sufferings.  
To become like you  
in your death, my Lord,  
so with you to live  
and never die.

**Knowing you, Jesus...****Prayers of Intercession:**

As we move into a time of prayer, may we pause, between the lines as we bring the burdens of the people we know and love; the burdens of the people we hear of and see in the news; the burdens of the people we laugh with and cry with.

**Let us pray:** All-powerful God, you understand our needs before we think and speak, we unload our pains and joys, our sorrows and our celebrations, and bring our prayers before you:

For the hurting and the hurt; for the loved and the loveless; for the young and the old; for believers and non-believers; for those certain of their faith and those who waver; for those of different faiths and identities from us; for the ill and those in pain and distress; for the dying; for the grieving and burdened by grief.

All-powerful God, surround each and everyone with the circle of your protection. We bring our prayers in and through the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. **Amen**

**Hymn: Show me how to stand for justice**

Martin Leckebusch

**StF 713**

1. Show me how to stand for justice:  
how to work for what is right,  
how to challenge false assumptions,  
how to walk within the light.  
May I learn to share more freely  
in a world so full of greed,  
showing your immense compassion  
by the life I choose to lead.

2. Teach my heart to treasure mercy,  
whether given or received –  
for my need has not diminished  
since the day I first believed:  
let me seek no satisfaction  
boasting of what I have done,  
but rejoice that I am pardoned  
and accepted in your Son.

3. Gladly I embrace a lifestyle  
modelled on your living word,  
in humility submitting  
to the truth which I have heard.

Make me conscious of your presence  
every day in all I do:  
by your Spirit's gracious prompting  
may I learn to walk with you.

**Blessing:**

May the grace of Christ redeem you, the power of Christ renew you, the example of Christ inspire you and the love of Christ shine from you.

Go in faith, to walk his way and make his love known, to his glory.

**Amen.**