

East Durham Methodist Circuit:
Online Service for 3rd October 2021

Prepared by Peter Walsham

Theme: Human Relationships

Call to worship:

From a 'Song of Creation'.

Bless the Lord all people on earth: sing his praise and exalt him forever. O people of God bless the Lord: bless the Lord you priests and servants of the Lord, all you of upright spirit. Bless the Lord you that are holy and humble in heart. Bless the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: sing his praise and exalt him forever. **Amen**

Hymn: All praise to our redeeming Lord Charles Wesley **StF 608 / H&P 753**

1. All praise to our redeeming Lord,
who joins us by his grace,
and bids us, each to each restored,
together seek his face.

3. The gift which he on one bestows,
we all delight to prove,
the grace through every vessel flows
in purest streams of love.

2. He bids us build each other up;
and, gathered into one,
to our high calling's glorious hope
we hand in hand go on.

4. E'en now we think and speak the
same,
and cordially agree,
concentred all, through Jesus' name,
in perfect harmony.

Prayers of confession:

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name: through Christ our Lord.

Gracious God, we acknowledge that we are far from being perfect, letting you down in thought and word and deed. We have not behaved according to your holy will and for this we are truly sorry. We ask your cleansing forgiveness by the power of your Spirit and in the precious name of Jesus our Lord and Saviour.

Share your Spirit with us today, so that we may learn from you and receive your guidance as we seek to work for you this coming week. In all that we do may it be to your praise and glory.

We ask this prayer in and through the name of Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray saying:

**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: Just as I am without one plea

Charlotte Elliott **StF 556 / H&P 697**

1. Just as I am, without one plea,
but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

2. Just as I am, and waiting not
to rid my soul of one dark blot,
to thee, whose blood can cleanse each
spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

3. Just as I am, though tossed about
with many a conflict, many a doubt;
fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

4. Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;
sight, riches, healing of the mind,
yea, all I need, in thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

5. Just as I am, thou wilt receive;
wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

6. Just as I am, thy love unknown
has broken every barrier down;
now to be thine, yea, thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

7. Just as I am, of that free love
the breadth, length, depth, and height to
prove,
here for a season, then above:
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Old Testament Reading: Genesis 2:18-24

New International Version

¹⁸The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." ¹⁹Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.

²⁰So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh.

²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." ²⁴That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh

New Testament Reading: Mark 10: 2-12

² Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

³ "What did Moses command you?" he replied.

⁴ They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."

⁵ "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. ⁶ "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' ⁷ 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, ⁸ and the two

will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

¹⁰ When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. ¹¹ He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. ¹² And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

Hymn: Come all who look to Christ today Richard G. Jones **StF 678 / H&P 765**

1. Come, all who look to Christ today,
Stretch out your hands, enlarge your
mind,
Together share his living way
Where all who humbly seek will find.

2. Come, all who will from every race;
Find here new powers of brotherhood,
Accept the Spirit's strong embrace
Which binds us to the common good.

3. Come, young and old from every
church,
Bring all your treasures of prayer,
Join the dynamic Spirit's search
To press beyond the truths we share.

4. Bring your traditions' richest store,
Your hymns and rites
and cherished creeds;
Explore our visions, pray for more,
Since God delights to meet fresh needs.

5. Come, trust in Christ and live in
peace,
Anticipate that final light
When strife and bigotry shall cease,
And faith be lost in praise and sight.

Message:

How times have changed in terms of human relationships.

As generations change the way society behaves, we are confronted with major challenges to our fundamental beliefs, which by and large were moulded and grounded by what our parents/guardians believed to be correct and true in their generation. This has been the model throughout time and we see it clearly required throughout scripture.

In Deuteronomy 11:19 The old Law given by God to Moses says this about observing God's instructions as to how to behave:

"Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

and Proverbs 1:8

"Listen my son/daughter to your Father and Mother's instruction, do not forsake their teaching, for it is a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck."

My own upbringing and development throughout my life has been one of listening to my parents' instruction and opinion/beliefs, so that I have developed similar moral standards.

Granted, I haven't always done what they would have wished, particularly in my teenage years, but by and large my major influences in what I believe and how I conduct myself has come from my parents' advice and guidance.

But just to emphasise how things change so quickly, one of my friends had a brother who was 5 years younger than us and he brought his girlfriend home one day and she stayed the night, sleeping in his bed. Something I and my friend would never contemplate due to respect for our parents. And this practice is common today.

A century ago, marriages were conducted in a church and were made for life. Sex and getting pregnant before marriage brought a judgemental stigma that was almost impossible to remove. Yet today, we see young, single girls deliberately getting pregnant in order to secure council housing.

The work ethic has also changed with many people happy to rely on benefits, rather than working hard for a living.

And all this influences the next generation as they grow and develop.

Divorce was seldom practiced and if you were stuck in terrible marriage, it was often very difficult to free yourself from this situation. However, over the past 50 years and leading up to today, 33% of marriages end in divorce. It's interesting to note that the Muslim and Jewish communities in the UK have much less divorce, with 8% and 9% being recorded respectively.

Marriage has changed dramatically just recently with the legal permission for same sex partners allowed to be married, and this has and continues to be a hot potato in terms of our Christian beliefs, attitudes and faith, and it's very difficult to discern the mind of Christ in all of this.

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In Jesus' day, the people were guided by God's Law which was given to Moses on Mount Sinai. This Law was developed from our first reading from Genesis, where God created Man first but realised he needed a companion throughout life and therefore created Woman, and God intended the two to be joined as one.

However, as generations developed and changed over many centuries, so too did their customs and practices.

Very much like today, the passing of time changed many things and by the time Jesus came on the scene, divorce was granted for very trivial reasons. Eg: If a wife spoiled a dish of food, if she spun wool in the street, if she spoke to a strange man, if she had a loud voice...

All this was directed at the woman's failings and divorce was settled by a simple written note from the husband, and this was a very common practice in Jesus' day. The old law from Moses was much different and only allowed divorce on the grounds of Adultery.

But Jesus' answer goes further back than Moses and quotes from Genesis, where he states a marriage is a lifelong, permanent union between two people which cannot be broken by any human laws and regulations. It's not just a physical uniting of the two, but there is a spiritual dimension involved also.

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So, what about today, does this passage still have any relevance regarding the type of personal relationships we have in our society? We have couples co-habiting, same sex legal partnerships and marriages, massive age differences in many relationships. What is the Christian view point and belief on this?

To be honest, and rightly or wrongly, the church appears to be divided.

Some believe that marriage should only be allowed and blessed by God when a man and a woman make their vows in church. Some feel that a church wedding is not necessarily required but still should be between a man and a woman who make sincere vows to each other. There are others who accept that a man and a woman can live together without being married.

And, there are some who believe that same sex relationships, including marriage, is all part of God's encompassing love for every human being.

So many views, yet there is one constant dominating factor in these beliefs and it is that LOVE between the two people must be sincere and binding. That trusting, forgiving, sharing love between the two partners must be the guiding light in any relationship. And here the Christian influence is broadcast loud and clear.

Hear these words from St. Paul, in his first letter to the **Corinthians 13:4**

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude or self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

Here is the roadmap for a long-lasting relationship to be successful, built around the true principles taught by Jesus Christ.

No matter what your view or belief on today's personal relationships amongst people, if these principles are practiced, then LOVE will reign supreme. **Amen**

Prayers of Intercession:

Loving God we bring before you now our concerns for others in our world who are in need.

We pray for those who are sick in body, mind and spirit. For those who feel trapped and without hope by disease and infirmity. Be close to all who suffer and those who care for them at this time.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer

We pray for our councillors and politicians who make and oppose the difficult decisions made on our behalf. Many are attending party conferences at this time of year, and we ask for your wisdom and discernment during the varied discussions that will take place. May your voice of reason be heard.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer

We pray for our community where we live and work. For every family and home around us. Help us to be a good neighbour, willing to serve as Christ requires of us. To give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wound, to labour and not to ask for any reward, save of knowing that we do your will.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer

We pray for our planet Earth. Your creation that you made perfect. Forgive our greed and selfishness. Forgive our lack of care and attention to the resources you have given

us and help us to foster a more sensible and responsible attitude when using all that you have provided for us.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer

Finally, we pray for ourselves. Help us to be thankful for what we have. Teach us to share what we have. Bless all that we have and are so that we might be your ambassador on earth, looking to share your love in the lives of others.

All this we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen

Hymn: Love divine all loves excelling Charles Wesley **StF 503 / H&P 267**

1. Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of Heav'n to earth come down;
Fix in us thy humble dwelling;
All thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
Pure unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.

3. Finish, then, Thy new creation;
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see Thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in Thee;
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in Heav'n we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

2. Come, Almighty to deliver,
Let us all Thy life receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Nevermore Thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above,
Pray and praise Thee without ceasing,
Glory in Thy perfect love.

Blessing:

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore.

Amen.