

East Durham Methodist Circuit:
Online Service for 7th November 2021

Prepared by Jean Shotton

Theme: Rest in Jesus

Call to worship:

Hearts open, ready to receive. Ears attentive, ready to hear. Minds alert, ready to understand. Let us be still. We are your people here to praise, pray and honour your name. Now is the time to worship.

Hymn: **Lord You call us to Your Service** Marjorie Dobson **StF 664**

1. Lord, you call us to your service, each in our own way
Some to caring, loving, healing, some to preach or pray
Some to work with quiet learning, truth discerning, day by day.
2. Life for us is always changing in the work we share.
Christian love adds new dimensions to the way we care.
For we know that you could lead us, as you need us anywhere.
3. Seeing life from your perspective makes your challenge plain,
As your heart is grieving over those who live in pain.
Teach us how by our compassion, you may fashion hope again.
4. Lord we set our human limits on the work we do.
Send us your directing Spirit, pour your power through,
That we may be free in living and in giving all for you

Prayers of approach and confession:

In the middle of the busyness of life, **you call us.**

When work and leisure, joy and sorrow make us close our eyes to you, **you call us.**

Through all the living world, through seasons' change, through wind and rain, **you call us.**

Through human creativity, through all our skills as makers and shapers, through everything we build we echo your creative power. Through all of this, **you call us.**

Through everyone we meet, through family and friends, through strangers, through those we care for and through those who care for us, **you call us.**

Through all things, you call us to relationship, to reconciliation and to peace, **you call us.**

We bring our busyness and our concerns; our doubts and our yearnings, our fears and our flaws; our hopes and our enthusiasm; we bring all that we are to the One who knows us inside and out, yet loves us today, tomorrow and for all time.

In this time of quiet and reflection, we acknowledge our distorted priorities... We ask you to forgive our blustering and hurried habits. Remind us that we need to regain the peace of treasured moments with friends and family, which in turn, allow our closeness to you, our Creator, to Jesus, our Shepherd and to your renewing Spirit. **Amen**

We ask these prayers in the name of Jesus who taught us to say:

**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: **Psalm 23** from Psalms now by Leslie Brandt

The Lord is my Constant Companion, there is no need that he cannot fulfil.
Whether His course for me points to the valleys of human suffering, He is by my side. He is ever-present with me. He is close beside me when I tread the dark streets of danger and even when I flirt with death itself, He will not leave me.

When the pain is severe, He is near to comfort.
When the burden is heavy, He is there to lean upon.
When depression darkens my soul, He touches me with eternal joy.
When I feel empty and alone, He fills the vacuum with His power.

My security is in His promise to be near me always
and in the knowledge that He will never let me go.

And now a parody of Psalm 23 for the workaholic (Author Unknown):

The clock is my dictator, I shall not rest. It makes me lie down only when exhausted.
It leads me into dark depression and hounds my soul. It leads me in circles of frenzy, for activities sake.

Even though I run frantically from task to task, I will never get it all done, for my ideal is with me.

Deadlines and my need for approval, they drive me. They demand performance from me, beyond the limits of my schedule. They anoint my head with migraines, My in-basket overflows.

Surely fatigue and time pressures shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the bonds of frustration forever.

Hymn: **Let love be real** Michael Forster (Londonderry Air) **StF 615**

1. Let love be real, in giving and receiving,
without the need to manage and to own;

a haven free from posing and pretending,
where every weakness may be safely known.
Give me your hand, along the desert pathway,
give me your love wherever we may go:

**As God loves us, so let us love each other,
with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.**

2. Let love be real, not grasping or confining,
that strange embrace that holds yet sets us free;
that helps us face the risk of truly living,
and makes us brave to be what we might be.
Give me your strength when all my words are weakness, give me your love in spite
of all you know:

As God loves us...

3. Let love be real, with no manipulation,
no secret wish to harness or control;
let us accept each other's incompleteness,
and share the joy of learning to be whole.
Give me your hope through dreams and disappointments, give me your trust when
all my failings show:

As God loves us...

Reading: Luke 10: 38 - 42 Jesus Visits Martha and Mary

As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught. But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing.

She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me." But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it and it will not be taken away from her."

Message: Love - Giving and Receiving

Following Jesus is not all about doing things, being busy serving Christ. That is obviously important and has its place but we also need a balance. We all need to learn to enjoy Christ, to take time out and sit at his feet. To rest and enjoy the company of Jesus!

For about two and a half years, Jesus has been on the road, travelling around as an itinerant preacher teaching and healing in village after village. He has become well known - word gets about and the crowds follow Him from place to place, seeking His help, wanting to listen to Him; there is a constant stream of people wanting to be healed!

Earlier in Luke chapter (vs 1-24), Jesus sent out the 72 as his ambassadors. They were very busy going from place to place, they were busy in serving Christ.

We all need time to talk with Jesus. To pray, to listen, to take time out, to rest and enjoy being in His presence, without other things 'crowding in'.

After a period of ministry, of teaching and healing, both Jesus and His followers were exhausted.

Jesus and the disciples were on a journey through Judea: they had sought some peace and quiet, so it was that they made their way to a friend's home.

In vs 38 we read: "As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. Luke doesn't tell us the name of the village; but he does tell us who lived there - Mary and her sister Martha. John's Gospel (Ch 11: 1) fills in the details. Three people share the house in Bethany (Martha, Mary and Lazarus) which is some 2 miles from Jerusalem on the road to Jericho. For Jesus this was a place of rest and relaxation.

And so He comes to the home of His friends... Lazarus, Mary and Martha. When Jesus arrives both sisters are delighted to see Him - enthusiastic, but they demonstrated this in very different ways.

We could describe **Martha** as energetic; she is so eager to serve, and the first to roll up her sleeves busy herself, ready to help. She is probably the first one up in the morning preparing for the day and the last one to bed at night after making sure every dish is cleaned and put away with everything in its right place. You get an impression with Martha - a meal prepared; that she is the perfect host.

Mary seems to be a more a reflective person, she just wants to spend time with her dear friend. She sat at the feet of Jesus and listened to Him. Not asking too much of Him, but hanging on His every word. She is a good listener, sensitive to her weary friend, a calming presence.

So, Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made - 'not knowing which way to turn', rushed off her feet, while Mary sees Jesus and thinks I must go and talk with Him.

Martha sees Jesus and thinks, Jesus is here, I must take care of Him; I've a meal to prepare!

Would we have reacted much differently? Charles Wesley said it perfectly in one of his hymns: "**Faithful to my Lord's commands, I still would choose the better part; Serve with careful Martha's hands, And loving Mary's heart**".

The important thing is spending time in the presence of Jesus. He knows moments of quiet like these are few and far between. He also knows he has precious little time left on earth.

For us... Do we imitate Mary in our worship and Martha in our work...?

Can we find a balance? Practical skills balanced with our devotions?

What we do **with** Christ, is far more important than what we do **for** Christ.
Service is good and important; but busy people must learn to slow down and prioritise!

Many things distract us – take time for oneself, turn to the Lord to know where your energies are needed most, then look to others and reflect on the outcome. **Amen**

Hymn: **All Are Welcome** Marty Haugen **StF 409**

1. Let us build a house where love
can dwell
And all can safely live
A place where Saints and children tell
How hearts learn to forgive
Built of hopes and dreams and
visions
Rock of faith and vault of grace
Here the love of Christ shall end
divisions

**All are welcome, all are welcome
All are welcome in this place**

2. Let us build a house where
prophets speak
And words are strong and true
Where all God's children dare to seek
To dream God's reign anew

Here the cross shall stand as witness
And a symbol of God's grace
Here as one we claim the faith of
Jesus

All are welcome...

3. Let us build a house where love is
found
In water, wine and wheat
A banquet hall on holy ground
Where peace and justice meet
Here the love of God, through Jesus
Is revealed in time and space
As we share in Christ the feast that
frees us.

All are welcome...

Prayers of Intercession:

In all our busyness, help us to know when to stop.
In all our quietness, help us to know when to act.
When we rush about and there's much to be done, help us to recognise you
alongside us.

When we need to be still and take time to think, may we respond to Your Spirit.
Amen

Hymn: **A new Commandment** Roy Crabtree **StF 242**

A new commandment I give unto you:
that you love one another as I have loved you,
that you love one another as I have loved you.
By this shall all know that you are my disciples:
if you have love one for another.
By this shall all know that you are my disciples:
if you have love one for another.

Closing Prayer:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love Of God and the Fellowship of the Holy
Spirit rest and remain with us all, now and forever more. **Amen.**

