



**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2021**    *'All time is God's time.'*

*Compiled by Rev Liz Singleton*

***Opening words***

God calls us to worship.  
Those from north, south, east and west are invited.  
Children, young people, women and men are invited.  
Poor or rich, struggling or prosperous are invited.  
Those from each and every kind of family are invited.  
All of us, with our strengths and weaknesses, are invited.  
God calls us to worship.

***Hymn Praise, my soul, the King of heaven (SthF 83 / H&P 13)***

1 Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;  
to his feet thy tribute bring.  
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,  
who like thee his praise should sing?  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise the everlasting King!

3 Father-like, he tends and spares us;  
well our feeble frame he knows;  
in his hands he gently bears us,  
rescues us from all our foes.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Widely as his mercy flows.

2 Praise him for his grace and favour  
to our fathers in distress;  
praise him, still the same for ever,  
slow to chide, and swift to bless.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Glorious in his faithfulness.

4 Angels in the height adore him;  
ye behold him face to face;  
sun and moon, bow down before him,  
dwellers all in time and space.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise with us the God of grace!

*Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847)*

***Prayer***

Gracious God, you always make time for us;  
we are sorry that we don't always make time for you.  
When we are rushing around being busy, sometimes even when we are doing your work,  
we forget about you.  
We are sorry that we make our lives so full that there is no room left for you –  
no room to get away, to be in a quiet place with you.  
Forgive us, Lord, and help us to slow down and to make space for you to dwell within us.  
And in that dwelling place, may we see what you want us to do and who you want us to spend time with.  
Help us to get the right balance, a right rhythm for life, a rhythm that is in tune with you.  
Amen

***Reading Mark 6: 30 – 34, 53 – 56 NLT***

<sup>30</sup>The apostles returned to Jesus from their ministry tour and told him all they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup>Then Jesus said, "Let's go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile." He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn't even have time to eat.

<sup>32</sup>So they left by boat for a quiet place, where they could be alone. <sup>33</sup>But many people recognised them and saw them leaving, and people from many towns ran ahead along the shore and got there ahead of them.

<sup>34</sup>Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

<sup>53</sup>After they had crossed the lake, they landed at Gennesaret. They brought the boat to shore <sup>54</sup>and climbed out. the people recognised Jesus at once, <sup>55</sup>and they ran throughout the whole area, carrying sick people on mats to wherever they heard he was. <sup>56</sup>Wherever he went – in villages, cities, or the countryside – they brought the sick out to the marketplaces. They begged him to let the sick touch at least the fringe of his robe, and all who touched him were healed.

**Reflection** *with thanks to Leonard Sweet*

The words and actions of today's reading remind us of two things. Firstly, of the need to take time to recharge our spiritual batteries and rest our physical bodies. And secondly, that even our 'time off' is God's time. That's not saying that we have to constantly be 'on the go' for God – far from it. Rather it's about how we understand God in terms of our day to day lives and the way we see time.

Let me try and explain what I mean. Think about your weekly diary, whether that's a diary you keep in the physical sense – writing down allocated times for appointments and tasks – or a diary you just keep in your head – mentally planning out your days. Do you schedule 'God time' into your diary? An hour for church on Sundays. Two hours for the Bible study every other Thursday? Half an hour for the prayer meeting on Tuesday mornings? I know I've been guilty of doing just this - segmenting life into 'God times' and 'my times'. And I also know that it doesn't work! It isn't about finding time for God, it's about finding God's time in our time, all our time. We are as much immersed in God's time lying on the beach in the height of a summer heatwave as when we are heartily singing 'O Come All Ye Faithful' on Christmas morning or proclaim 'Christ is risen' on Easter Day.

The disciples have returned from their mission, which was described in our reading a couple of weeks ago, and they are bubbling over with enthusiasm, anxious to share with Jesus all that they had done and taught. In the midst of all the comings and goings Jesus suggests to them 'Come away with me....and rest a while.' The disciples possibly thought that they were escaping for a while but after a short, restful boat trip they witnessed Jesus feeding the 5000 and walking on water. I wonder which experience left the disciples more rested and refreshed in spirit? I suspect both, for God was present in their time of rest and God was present in all the activity when the crowds arrived.

In the Buddhist tradition there is an expression – Chop wood; carry water. It is a way of saying that spiritual meaning can be found in the smallest, most ordinary tasks of the day. God is present in each moment of our days – we just don't always recognise him in those moments when we're ploughing through our emails; or working through the accounts; or juggling family commitments with work demands; or watching the latest episode of Emmerdale. God's time is in all our time whether at rest, play or work. And whilst it is clear that we do have to take care of ourselves so that we can continue to share in God's kingdom work with renewed energy and improved vision, we mustn't completely shut down. Letting the 'engines run idle' is different to turning off the ignition

During the lockdowns of the past 16 months what did you do? Did you switch off from God's time, scheduling in the 'At Home' service during the week and perhaps attending a fortnightly Bible study on Zoom? Or did you relish the opportunity to immerse yourself in God's time – recognising God in the rainbows displayed in people's windows and in the household tasks that filled our days? And how will that now influence the way in which you and your church respond to lifting of Covid restrictions?

So rather than making time for God, scheduling him into our diaries and squeezing him in between meetings, let us remember that all time is God's time for when we do that he will surprise us in wonderful ways; he will challenge us in amazing ways; and he will draw us even closer into his loving presence.

**Hymn** *Be still for the presence of the Lord (StheF 20)*

1 Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
the Holy One, is here;  
come bow before him now  
with reverence and fear:  
in him no sin is found –  
we stand on holy ground.  
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
the Holy One, is here.

2 Be still, for the glory of the Lord  
is shining all around;  
he burns with holy fire,  
with splendour he is crowned:  
how awesome is the sight -  
Our radiant King of light!  
Be still, for the glory of the Lord  
is shining all around.

3 Be still, for the power of the Lord  
is moving in this place;  
he comes to cleanse and heal,  
to minister his grace:  
no work too hard for him –  
in faith receive from him.  
Be still, for the power of the Lord  
is moving in this place.

*David J Evans (b1957)*

**Prayer** *written by Marjorie Dobson*

Wherever Jesus went the crowds followed him. Even when he tried to escape for peace and rest, they were there waiting for him, needing him, looking for comfort and healing.

So, we pray today for all those who are caught in that same trap.

We pray for those who are full-time carers for a person they love and who rarely have opportunities for respite from that responsibility.

We pray for those living with someone with dementia, constantly needing to be vigilant and listening to the same questions and confusion time after time.

**Lord, give them rest.**

We pray for parents dealing with difficult children, especially at those stages of life where tantrums are frequent, or rebellion rages against authority.

We pray for those workers who are exploited and must slave for long hours for little reward and no free time.

**Lord, give them rest.**

We pray for those caught in a cycle of anxiety and anguish, whose minds can never be clear from the stress that they carry.

We pray for those who always seem to be in the centre of an emotional turmoil of relationships – their own, or those of family and friends.

**Lord, give them rest**

We pray for those whose employment is for the welfare of others, but who find it difficult to disentangle themselves from their work in their own leisure time.

We pray for all who feel that they are trying to meet demands that are too great for their capacity to cope.

**Lord, give them rest.**

Loving and caring God, we bring these heartfelt prayers, knowing that you understand the weariness that calls out for rest. Hold us and help us and grant us your peace.

Amen

***The Lord's Prayer***

***Hymn Christ, from whom all blessings flow (StheF 676 / H&P 764)***

1 Christ, from whom all blessings flow,  
perfecting the saints below,  
hear us, who thy nature share,  
who thy mystic body are.

4 Never from thy service move,  
needful to each other prove,  
use the grace on each bestowed,  
tempered by the art of God.

2 Join us, in one spirit join,  
let us still receive of thine;  
still for more on thee we call,  
thou who fillest all in all.

5 Love, like death, has all destroyed,  
rendered all distinctions void;  
names, and sects, and parties fall:  
thou, O Christ, art all in all.

3 Closer knit to thee, our head,  
nourished, Lord, by thee, and fed,  
let us daily growth receive,  
more in Jesus Christ believe.

*Charles Wesley (1707 – 88)*

*Still Point* by Pat Marsh

Lord,  
I turn my thoughts  
to you.

Within the whirlwind of my day  
I stop  
and think of you.

It's far too easy to forget you  
in the busyness and bustle  
of the day,  
as other pressures crowd and fill my mind.  
And when I pause  
I find myself  
astonished  
that whilst your closeness has been crowded out  
yet still  
you have been there,  
your steady love  
surrounding me.

Hello again, Lord.

It's good to reconnect with you,  
to take a breath  
and feel your powerful presence  
in this scene;  
enter into stillness  
and sense you standing by my side,  
shoulder to shoulder in this time, this place,  
pouring out your love  
unceasingly.

Lord, thank you.

Thank you that you never leave me  
even when,  
especially when, perhaps,  
my temporary amnesia  
forgets that you are there.

***Blessing:***

At work, at rest, at leisure,  
may the blessing and the peace of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
be with you on every side, at every turn, each day and each night, today and always. Amen

*Original material Rev Liz Singleton  
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**Reflections on A Methodist Way Of Life – WORSHIP**

When, lately, have you felt close to God or distant from God?  
Write down some words that describe how you felt.  
Take a photo of a place, or find a picture, that helps you to better recognise  
that all time is God's time and he is with you.