



Highcliffe and Bransgore Methodist Churches

Sunday 2nd August 2020, 10:30am, Matthew 7: 13-14 "Enter through the narrow gate"

Prepared by Rev'd Phillip Dixon with contributions from Pam Sturtridge and Jenny Hutchins.

This written worship has been prepared to bless you and help bring us together into the presence of God to worship Him in Spirit and Truth. We gather in separate homes but fully united in love by the Holy Spirit for our Lord Jesus Christ. Knowing that we share in this worship of God with our brothers and sisters in Christ is hopefully an encouragement to you and can, through the work of God's Spirit, bring us all closer together, as a church, the family of faith in Jesus.



Good morning church!

Opening Prayer:

We come today to worship you O Lord, separated physically yet united by your Holy Spirit. We come in adoration and praise. O Lord, who created the whole world and everything in it, how majestic is your name in all the earth. *Pause*

We see the beauty of the moon and the stars, the mountains and the valleys and we gaze in awe at the wonderful surroundings in which You have placed us. O God, how can we praise you enough and reflect Your glory? *Pause*

May the glory of the Lord endure for ever. We bring our praise and adoration, gracious God, for all that You have done throughout time.

We offer ourselves to You through Your Son Jesus Christ our Lord **Amen.**

Pam Sturtridge, Bransgore Worship Leader

Proclamation:

And a highway will be there;
it will be called the Way of Holiness;
it will be for those who walk on that Way.
The unclean will not journey on it;
wicked fools will not go about on it.

No lion will be there,
nor any ravenous beast;
they will not be found there.
But only the redeemed will walk there,
and those the Lord has rescued will return.

They will enter Zion with singing;
everlasting joy will crown their heads.
Gladness and joy will overtake them,
and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Amen. Isaiah 35: 8-10 NIV(UK).

Hymn: StF 465 Guide me O' thou great Redeemer. Sing/read /pray/proclaim.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAN4EojeFOY>

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty,
Hold me with thy powerful hand;
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven
Feed me till I want no more;
Feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through:
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer;
Be thou still my strength and shield;
Be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell's destruction
Land me safe on Canaan's side:
Songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee;
I will ever give to thee.

William Williams (1717-1791)

Prayer of Confession:

*Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.*

Psalm 51: 1,2 NIV(UK)

Let us confess our sins:

Lord, we come to you in confession of our sins. We would love to walk the straight and narrow way, but often end up wandering on rough and stony ground. **Forgive our waywardness.**

We try to do things our way or listen to prophets but don't realise that they are false ones. We stray from Your ways and from Your voice. **Forgive our lack of concentration.**

For words that we have spoken in haste, relationships that have been marred and actions that we regret **Forgive us and cleanse our hearts.**

When we have discriminated between rich and poor, colour and creed, and even our attitude towards other people Transform us, Lord, by the power of Your love, so that we reach out and touch where there is need. We come to You in humility and in faith, asking that You will pardon us for all our sins and grant us Your peace. Use our hands, feet and voices to bring blessings to all whom we meet **Amen.**

Pause

In a time of silence and reflection we recall specific instances for which we are asking forgiveness. We listen to what God may be saying to us.

May the God of all healing and forgiveness draw us close to Himself and cleanse us from all of our sins so that we may behold the glory of His Son, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession written by Pam Sturtridge. Absolution taken from Common Worship

A poem based on Matthew 7 13,14.

“Drawing a Line” by Deborah Ann.

<https://poetrybydeborahann.wordpress.com/>

There is a line,
we mustn't cross
nor is it one over
which we can gloss.

For It separates,
the dark from the light
and we must choose
which battle to fight.

There is a line,
we mustn't straddle
nor is it on one
we should travel.

For it divides,
where our treasures lay
be it up in heaven
or on the wide way.

There is a line,
we all need to make . . .
and we need to decide
what road to take!

Preparation for the reading and preaching of scripture:

Father, prepare our hearts for the reading of Your word, help us to understand the meaning of what we are reading. By the power of Your Holy Spirit may these words, spoken by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, speak to us today of the truth that following You is the best choice we can ever make **Amen**

Gospel Reading: Matthew 7:13-14

¹³ "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad *and* easy to travel is the path that leads the way to destruction *and* eternal loss, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow *and* difficult to travel is the path that leads the way to [everlasting] life, and there are few who find it. Amplifies Bible (AMP)

A time to pause, read again, pray, and reflect.

Preaching notes:

"Where we end up depends on which road we take". It may seem such an obvious statement to make but clearly for Jesus, at this point of his teaching, it was essential to point out that there is a now a choice to make. He has unfolded precisely for each one of us in the preceding two chapters (Matthew 5 and 6) the characteristics of the true Christian life, concerning prayer, concerning anger, concerning giving etc. and now summing up: "this is what it means to be one of His followers".

Many sermons preached and ink used to write about these two short verses yet they continue to be a cause for disagreement, misunderstanding, misrepresentation or just ignored as being too challenging and too exclusive. As with "ask, seek and knock" from the previous week's teaching, the word "enter" (from the Greek *eisérchomai*) has an imperative to it, a sense of urgency, a question that begs to be answered: "which way will you go"? Jesus very helpfully tells us the consequence of the decision.

These two verses in particular, like much of chapter 7, can be seen as a bridge between the characteristics of being a true Christian and the actions that must be taken by us as individuals in accepting and living out these characteristics as true Christians. Modern terminology would say: "this is where the rubber meets the road", or "from the drawing board into full production", we have heard the teaching now it's time to "jump right in and live it".

J. C. Ryle, the great 19th century Bible expositor and Bishop of Liverpool:

“These are fearful truths! They ought to raise great searchings of heart in the minds of all who hear them. “Which way am I going? By what road am I traveling?” In one or other of the two ways here described, every one of us may be found”. He suggests prayer, the revelation of the Holy Spirit in our lives and a deep and honest look at our lives (Psalm 139 “O Lord search me...lead me in the way everlasting).

The companion verses to Matthew 7:13,14 is found in Luke 13:24 where an even greater emphasis is placed on the importance of entering through the narrow gate with the addition of “strive”. One commentator says: “we do not just find ourselves at the narrow gate, we arrive there as a choice reminiscent of Christian in the John Bunyan classic Pilgrims Progress: “Then said Evangelist, pointing with his finger over a very wide field, Do you see yonder Wicket Gate? The man said, No. Then said the other, Do you see yonder Shining Light? He said, I think I do. Then said Evangelist, Keep that Light in your eye, and go directly thereto, so shalt thou see the Gate”. See John 10:9 Jesus speaking: “I am the gate, whoever enters by me will be saved”. Jesus is both the good shepherd and the gate (offering the way to salvation).

In summary: the narrow gate is not hard to find when illuminated by God’s Light. Following Jesus as a disciple involves choices that have consequences for our eternal destination. An abundant life in the now and the eternal is available to all who accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour and follow Him (John 10:10)– how can that be anything other than fully inclusive? **Amen.**

Song: Because He lives

Sing/read /pray/proclaim the words.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwBqG7uXbY>

I believe in the Son
I believe in the risen One
I believe I overcome
By the power of His blood

Amen, Amen

I'm alive, I'm alive

Because He lives

Amen, Amen

Let my song join the one that never ends

Because He lives

I was dead in the grave
I was covered in sin and shame
I heard Mercy call my name
He rolled the stone away

Amen, Amen

I'm alive, I'm alive

Because He lives

Amen, Amen

Let my song join the one that never ends

Because He lives

I can face tomorrow

Because He lives

Every fear is gone

I know He holds my life my future in His hands

Amen, Amen

I'm alive, I'm alive

Because He lives

Amen, Amen

Let my song join the one that never ends

Amen, Amen

I'm alive, I'm alive

Because He lives

Amen, Amen

Let my song join the one that never ends.

Songwriters: Chris Tomlin / Daniel Carson / Ed Cash / Gloria Gaither / Jason Ingram / Matt Maher / William J. Gaither

We pray together our Lord's Prayer

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.**

Prayers of Intercession:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:6-7 NIV)

Heavenly Father we praise You for the opportunity to intercede for others and bring them to You. We pray for our world as it continues to suffer from the covid-19 pandemic, we pray You will give guidance to the leaders of countries around the world as they seek to ease lockdowns and restart their economies. **Lord in Your mercy – hear our prayer.**

We pray for all of the work being done to find treatments and vaccines, guide and direct the scientists in all they do and bless their efforts. **Lord in Your mercy - hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who have been shielding as they start to meet more people and go out, many may still be feeling anxious, we pray Lord that You will be with them and protect them. **Lord in Your mercy – hear our prayer.**

We pray for the families who are struggling financially, bless the work of the foodbanks and other organisations who help overcome food deprivation. Many people have been furloughed and do not know if they have a job to come back to, some have businesses that are trying to keep going in these difficult times. **Lord in Your mercy – hear our prayer.**

We pray for our brothers and sisters in the persecuted church around the world especially in India and Bangladesh, be with them and provide the help and support they need. **Lord in Your mercy – hear our prayer.**

We pray for our Methodist circuit, for Pauline our Superintendent, our Local Preachers and Worship leaders, each of the members of our circuit leadership team and the stewards and members of our fellowships as they prepare to reopen their buildings. Be with the office holders and stewards of Bransgore and Highcliffe, guide and direct them in all they do. **Lord in Your mercy – hear our prayer.**

We pray for those in our fellowship who are unwell, facing hospital appointments and unsure as to what the future holds, be with them and reassure them Lord that You will never leave them nor forsake them. **Lord in Your mercy – hear our prayer.**

We pray Lord that You will go with us into this new week ahead, help us to seek You every day and in every way and follow Your true way for our lives.

We bring these prayers, spoken and unspoken in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. **Amen**

Jenny Hutchins Bransgore Worship Leader.

We have encountered some particularly challenging teaching this week. Following Jesus is a significant life choice. Joshua is right that it is a decision that needs to be made (Joshua 24:15) “decide this day who you will serve.... as for me and my household we will serve (follow) the Lord” and as our poem from Deborah Ann beautifully puts it that a line must be drawn -which side are you on?

Hymn: SoF 607 Who is on the Lord’s side
Sing/read /pray/proclaim the words.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=149&v=rJ5NCBLVL_o&feature=emb_logo

Who is on the Lord’s side? Who will serve the King?

Who will be His helpers, other lives to bring?

Who will leave the world’s side? Who will face the foe?

Who is on the Lord’s side? Who for Him will go?

By Thy call of mercy, by Thy grace divine,
We are on the Lord’s side – Saviour, we are Thine!

Not for weight of glory, nor for crown and palm,

Enter we the army, raise the warrior psalm;

But for love that claimeth lives for whom He died:

He whom Jesus saveth marches on His side.

By Thy love constraining, by Thy grace divine,

We are on the Lord’s side – Saviour, we are Thine!

Jesus, Thou hast bought us, not with gold or gem,

But with Thine own lifeblood, for Thy diadem;

With Thy blessing filling each who comes to Thee,

Thou hast made us willing, Thou hast made us free.

By Thy grand redemption, by Thy grace divine,

We are on the Lord’s side – Saviour, we are Thine!

Fierce may be the conflict, strong may be the foe,

But the King’s own army none can overthrow;

’Round His standard ranging, vict’ry is secure,

For His truth unchanging makes the triumph sure.

Joyfully enlisting, by Thy grace divine,

We are on the Lord’s side – Saviour, we are Thine!

Chosen to be soldiers, in an alien land,
Chosen, called, and faithful, for our Captain’s band;

In the service royal, let us not grow cold,
Let us be right loyal, noble, true and bold.

Master, wilt Thou keep us, by Thy grace divine,

Always on the Lord’s side – Saviour,
always Thine! Frances R. Havergal.

Blessing: Loving God, You are the path to everlasting life. Grant that Your Holy Spirit guides us so that we find and stay on the path to righteousness. Direct us in our thoughts and actions so we stay on the narrow path and don't begin to wander. Help us to resist the temptation to follow the crowd down a path that ultimately leads to destruction. **Amen.**

Until we meet again, God bless. Phillip
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phillip.dixon@methodist.org.uk YouTube links are external resources and are provided to help you engage with the songs. Singing the Faith and Hymns and Psalms resources are provided under license: CCLI 178182