

TAKE TIME OUT – *Pastoral Retreat*

Half Acre, Horton Heath, Wimborne, Dorset, BH21 7JS
Tel: 01202-824834 – Email: janice.morgan@methodist.org.uk

Sunday Scriptures: 17th October 2021

Scriptures: NRSV

John 17:10-26 *All God's people*

¹⁰All Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, protect them in Your name that You have given Me, so that they may be one, as we are One. ¹²“While I was with them, I protected them in Your name that You have given Me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the Scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³But now I am coming to You, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have My joy made complete in themselves. ¹⁴I have given them Your Word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵I am not asking You to take them out of the world, but I ask You to protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁷Sanctify them in Truth; Your Word is Truth. ¹⁸As you have sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, so that they also may be sanctified in Truth. ²⁰I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in Me through their word, ²¹that they may all be one. As You, Father, are in Me and I am in You, may they also be in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. ²²The glory that You have given Me I have given them, so that they may be one, as We are One, ²³I in them and You in Me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me. ²⁴Father, I desire that those also, whom You have given Me, may be with Me where I am, to see My glory, which You have given Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵Righteous Father, the world does not know You, but I know You; and these know that You have sent Me. ²⁶I made Your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

Reflection: UNITED with GOD

When people talk about unity they can mean a myriad of different things, some even in contradiction. For example, a politician would speak from the perspective of uniting behind a particular policy or an educationalist to unite in endorsing a particular set of principles and theories. An aid worker would look to unite people in providing for a particular situation or group in need, while a business seeks unity purely for profit! Any institution will use the word ‘unity’ as a means to coerce its members to conform in order to perpetuate that institution because its survival depends upon contributing numbers. This is why it is of vital importance to know what any group or institution believes in before signing up to follow its rules. Subsequently, any institution that does not follow its own rules is one that cannot be trusted. When we are aware of the spirit, principles, ethics and morals, involved, we are more likely to make a sound choice whether it is right for us to join or not, according to our own moral conscience. This also applies to the church, whose rules of faith are all contained in Scripture, both Old and New Testaments. The Body of Christ is to live by the commandments of God and example of His Son Jesus Christ. It follows then that if the Church, as the body of God’s people on earth, does not follow the rules of life contained in the Word of God and demonstrated by Jesus, it can no longer consider itself to be ‘Church’.

Jesus is praying in the first instance for God’s protection over His disciples as the people of God who will build His Church. It is evident that ownership of those who believe the Truth

TAKE TIME OUT – *Pastoral Retreat*

Half Acre, Horton Heath, Wimborne, Dorset, BH21 7JS
Tel: 01202-824834 – Email: janice.morgan@methodist.org.uk

contained in the Word of God and in Jesus as God's Son is shared within the Trinity. God's Word is synonymous with Truth throughout this prayer, being mentioned in unison five times. Therefore, Jesus is reiterating the unity of the Trinity; God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit as the perfect model of harmony between three different persons in one mind and spirit. This is how the people of God are meant to behave. We are different persons that endeavour to become one in mind and spirit as a coordinated body using every limb and organ to witness Truth. Jesus makes the distinction between being **in** the world but not **of** the world an astonishing ten times in His prayer. Furthermore He emphasises the need for protection against the worldly consequences of being a people of faith on earth. Jesus has given us God's Word and states that those who receive it are hated by the world for believing and living according to His rules for life. Jesus is leaving the world but He does not ask that His disciples are taken out of the world with Him, rather that they are protected for their faithful witness whilst living in the world. Jesus then extends this prayer to those who will come after the disciples and believe without having seen Him in the flesh, as they have. So the worldly consequences Jesus describes apply to all who believe as much as to the disciples at the time of this prayer. God has given us His Word, Jesus has given us the Gospel of Truth as a testimony of how to live as God desires, all we need now is protection from all that would seek to destroy what we, as God's people and disciples of Jesus, have been given. Our testimony and witness is to pass on the Word of God and Gospel Truth of Jesus to the next generation and support them in passing on this Truth to their next generation. *Are we achieving this?*

The desire of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit is that we become ONE: United by the Word of God we stand, divided by worldly understanding we fall! If we are united in and through Jesus we are also united in power and strength with the Father, His Spirit, and each other. If we allow worldly principles to divide us we break the umbilical cord of our spiritual sustenance, without which we become weak and easily destroyed. Holding fast to belief in Jesus and faith in the Word of God is our hope for meaning in this life and safe passage to eternal life. Unity within the Body of Christ depends firstly on our openness to God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and secondly on our openness with each other. Truth is essential to any healthy relationship; manipulation of Truth all too quickly spirals downward into evil thoughts, schemes, and actions. To love one another, as God desires and Jesus commanded, is to share honestly in good times and bad, by challenging and affirming, reproving and encouraging, withdrawing and supporting each other in maintaining righteousness. This raises many realistic questions of how to put the grace of God and love of Jesus into practice: *What is our response when someone comes to us with tales about another person?* The ninth commandment says, "You shall not bear false witness". God considers gossip to be an abomination because of its destructive nature, therefore, a righteous response would be to refuse to engage with it and encourage them to talk directly to the person they are gossiping about! *What is our response when someone puts forward an idea we had not thought of or does something better than we could achieve?* The tenth commandment says, "You shall not covet" and Jesus warns against the evil character and nature of jealousy. *How do we respond to someone who does something in a different way to ourselves?* Jesus says, "first take the speck out of your own eye" and was not afraid to challenge others in their hypocrisy ([Matthew 7:1-5](#)). *What is our first thought when someone comes to us in need or shares a deep trouble or concern?* On this Jesus gives us a 'Golden Rule' to follow: "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the

TAKE TIME OUT – *Pastoral Retreat*

Half Acre, Horton Heath, Wimborne, Dorset, BH21 7JS
Tel: 01202-824834 – Email: janice.morgan@methodist.org.uk

law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12). *How often do we ask each other how we are with genuine concern or give an honest answer when someone enquires after ourselves?* Christ-like love for one another would be willing to become vulnerable to each other as a priority to achieve understanding, healing and wholeness within the Church of God. *Why is it that we go to Church?* If we are God’s people, then we go to acknowledge His authority over all, to worship Him and give Him the glory for all the blessings He has given. “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

The Word of God and Gospel of Jesus is the one constant, solid and immovable foundation in an ever-changing world. Scripture is not to be added to or taken away from, neither is it subject to negotiation; we must take it or leave it in its entirety. We are not meant to understand everything and no one has ever told us that it would be easy to live in righteousness. However, just because we strive after an impossible ideal does not mean that we should not try to attain it! In our Trinitarian God there is balance as opposed to the imbalance of worldly standards. If we believe Jesus is God’s Son we accept the Holy Spirit, if we accept the Holy Spirit She will dwell within us to guide and inspire, to discipline and encourage. When we are born of water and the Spirit, we will know Truth and demonstrate the fruit of Her Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-Control (Galatians 5). Jesus used the word ‘ONE’ no less than six times in His prayer and reiterates unity as, “I in You... & them in Us three times. Without God unity cannot be achieved; without Jesus unity with God cannot be achieved; without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit unity with one another cannot be achieved. *Why is this so?* Because the free will of every human being is subject to error and worldly standards are open to corruption. The Lord says, “See, I Am coming soon...I will repay everyone according to their work” (Revelation 22:12-21). The next time you hear someone talking about unity, test the spirits and ask for discernment:... *where is God in this? Am I expected to perpetuate an institution or given freedom to follow Christ? Does this affirm the Word of God or deviate from it? Will what is being proposed unite or divide the Body of Christ?* Those called of God are to mirror the unity of the Trinity with one another on earth. We are to guard against conforming to the shifting standards of the world and instead witness a better way of life that is ‘other’ and honouring to the One True God over all, the Alpha and Omega. This is living united with God in faith and hope of realising His blessings in abundance. Lord may it be according to Your Word. **Amen!**

Hymn/Song: THY WORD by Amy Grant & Michael W. Smith - *SofF* 1066

Chorus:...

*Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path.*

When I feel afraid,
Think I’ve lost my way,
Still You’re there right beside me.
And nothing will I fear
As long as You are near;
Please be near me to the end.

Chorus:...

TAKE TIME OUT – *Pastoral Retreat*

Half Acre, Horton Heath, Wimborne, Dorset, BH21 7JS
Tel: 01202-824834 – Email: janice.morgan@methodist.org.uk

*Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path.*

I will not forget
Your love for me, and yet
My heart forever is wandering.
Jesus, be my guide
And hold me to Your side,
And I will love You to the end.

Chorus:...

*Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path.*

Poem: GOD'S PROPHETIC WORD ©Janice Morgan-2015

The Word of God is prophetic in nature
It tells the story of human adventure
The journey of life with God at the helm
Leads to a place in the heavenly realm
Where secrets are kept by the Spirit of God
Awaiting the time when a spiritual prod
Is needed to show the next step on the road
Or give wisdom to shake off the hurt of the goad
The strength to hold on when the way becomes rough
Is found in the Word of the Lord; that's enough
To recognise signs and predictions of wonders
And keep all God's children from making great blunders
God's way to our future is now plain to see
Believe in God's Word; what He says it will be!

Prayer:

God Almighty, Creator and Father; Jesus Christ, Saviour, Teacher, and Friend; Holy Spirit, Healer, Comforter and Guide; Give us grace to recognise the dangers of our division. Deliver us from all prejudice, hatred, and pride; Free us from all things that hinder and prevent our true union with You, and with each other. Unite us as one body in mind and spirit, joined in faith by one God, one Lord, and one Spirit, the Father of us all. Help us gain the harmony of Your Trinitarian being through Your never-ending fountain of life and love, that we may join to become one heart and one soul. Unite us in Your Truth and peace bonded together in faith that with one mind and voice may glorify You. Bless us, we pray, with the harmony You intend; this we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen!**