



Highcliffe and Bransgore Methodist Churches

Sunday 9th August 2020, 10:30am, Matthew 7: 15-20 “You will know them by their fruit”

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

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:

“I waited patiently for the Lord, He turned to me and heard my cry. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise”.

God of all ages, accept our sacrifice of praise!

Eternal God
it was Your Spirit
hovering over the waters
at the dawning of the first day
it was Your voice
echoing in the darkness
and brought forth light

God of all ages, accept our sacrifice of praise!

Heavenly Father we come before you in love and adoration this morning, we thank you for the beauty that surrounds us each day. Yours Lord is the glory in everything we see, feel and smell; be it a country scene, a gently flowing river or the waves breaking on the shore.

We praise You that we can come together in our own homes and share in sweet fellowship.

Lord, in everything we sing, pray, read and meditate on this morning may we worship You in truth and with our whole hearts giving You the glory, fill us afresh Lord with Your Holy Spirit and help us to bear good fruit honouring to You.

Jenny Hutchins, Bransgore Worship Leader

Proclamation:

“I am the real vine, my Father is the vine-dresser. He removes any of my branches which are not bearing fruit and he prunes every branch that does bear fruit to increase its yield. For just as the branch cannot bear any fruit unless it shares the life of the vine, so you can produce nothing unless you go on growing in me. This is how my Father will be glorified—in your becoming fruitful and being my disciples. **Amen.** Selected verses from John 15: 1-8

Translation by J B Phillips.

Hymn: SoF 120 The Servant King.

Sing/read /pray/proclaim the words.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p07hsmf5>

From heaven you came helpless babe
Entered our world, your glory veiled
Not to be served but to serve
And give Your life that we might live

*This is our God, The Servant King
He calls us now to follow Him
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to The Servant King*

There in the garden of tears
My heavy load he chose to bear
His heart with sorrow was torn
'Yet not My will but Yours, ' He said

Come see His hands and His feet
The scars that speak of sacrifice
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails surrendered

*This is our God, The Servant King
He calls us now to follow Him
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to The Servant King*

So let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone Him
Each other's needs to prefer
For it is Christ we're serving

*This is our God, The Servant King
He calls us now to follow Him
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to The Servant King*

*To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to The Servant King*

Graham Kendrick Copyright 1983 Thankyou Music

Lord, we pray that we may learn how to
serve one another -our fellowship- and in
so doing, it is Christ we are serving, may
we recognise service as an offering. **Amen**

Prayer of Confession:

Let us come humbly before Almighty God
to confess our sins:

Heavenly Father as we come before You
this morning we bring our sorrow, asking
forgiveness for the times when our
actions and reactions do not bring glory to
You.

Pause,

We are sorry that we have not been as
loving to others as we should, for times
when we have put our desires ahead of
others and for times when we have been
critical of others without knowing the full
facts.

Pause,

We are sorry when our lives do not bear
good fruit, forgive us Father when we do
not follow You, instead going our own way
and fulfilling our will, not Yours.

Pause,

In a time of silence we lay before You Lord
those sins that have divided our
relationships with others.

Pause,

*In the silence we listen to what God may
be saying to us. We give thanks that Jesus
came, suffered, died and rose again to
offer us a new and redeemed life.*

We believe that if we confess our sins
with a truly contrite heart and spirit You
will forgive us and cleanse us.

Thank you Lord for the assurance of
forgiveness and help us from this day
forward to follow You in all that we do. In
the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

Amen.

Jenny Hutchins, Bransgore Worship Leader

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 the lips of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, speak to us today of the truth that we must contend for the true faith, guarding against falsehood and counterfeit teaching, wherever it may come from. **Amen**

Gospel Reading: Matthew 7:15-20

¹⁵ 'Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognise them. Do people pick grapes from thorn-bushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognise them. New International Version (UK)

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

Preaching notes:

A warning from the very mouth of God is a warning to be taken seriously. Jesus begins by telling us -and it is us who are included in those he is speaking to- "watch out" or in some translations "beware", we are to be on our guard. This warning is intricately linked with what has come before it in our earlier passages from chapter 7: hypocrisy, finding God by

asking, seeking and knocking with all of our hearts, two alternative paths to take (and the deceptiveness of ease) and now the danger of false teaching coming from within the church itself. This is why it is so important for us to seek understanding to these words of Jesus from Matthew 7 as a complete teaching linked to chapters 5 and 6 (the complete "Sermon on the Mount") and not to take them out of their original context. Charles Spurgeon, the great 18th Century preacher writes "in reading this chapter (7) one is led to feel that it is not, after all an easy thing to be a sincere Christian". Indeed it is not, which is why it is so important that we are active participants in our relationship with God and with one another.

Sheep and shepherds, wolves, and the need to make the very best productive use of the land are terms that we hear but unless we are actively involved with agriculture for our daily living may not speak to us as strongly as they did for the first hearers. We are meant to hear these words as imagining ourselves sheep -not of course in a derogatory or literal sense – but in exactly the same manner as in Matthew 9:36 when Jesus is describing the leaderless and demoralised state of people: "they are **like** sheep without a shepherd". Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34 and John 10 are amongst the best-known Bible passages which use similar pictures of sheep and shepherds.

Jesus is emphasising, as do many of the New Testament letter writers (Paul, John, Peter and Jude) to the early churches, that false teaching creeps deceptively into the church -as a wolf dressed like a sheep. It is worth remembering that most false teaching has at its root what may begin as

a small corruption which develops into a false set of ideas. From this we can understand that most of the stated creeds we may say together (Apostles, Nicaea, Nicene, Chalcedonian) were written and agreed upon to counter false teaching which arose at various times.

J. C. Ryle, the 19th century evangelical Anglican bishop of Liverpool adds another important dimension to our understanding of Jesus' words: "This is a warning which is much needed. There are (many) thousands who seem ready to believe anything in religion if they hear it from an ordained minister. They forget that clergymen may err as much as laymen. They are not infallible".

It is for this very reason that I would suggest, as faithful Christians, we need to do two things:

1. Develop a love and desire to engage with our Bible, read for yourself the passages, pray for insight and revelation.
2. Be prepared to test, measure and discuss with others (perhaps in a group) what is being said from the pulpit or from these pages or online sermons against what the Bible actually says.

"By their fruit you will recognise them", it is said twice by Jesus. It is about how someone lives and what they say that matters (see also Matthew 12:33-37). However, we must recognise that just because someone may not agree with a particular interpretation it does not automatically make them a false prophet or a wolf. The Bible is written as a "love letter" not as a "note of condemnation".

Verse 19 can appear at first unsettling as it makes clear the consequences for "not bearing good fruit", but take heart from two important truths: firstly the story told by Jesus of the fig tree which has not given fruit and the owner wants to cut it down (Luke 13:8), the gardener says: "give it one more chance. Leave it another year, and I'll give it special attention and plenty of fertilizer". And secondly, good fruit may not be immediately recognisable by you but can be seen by others – pray to God for insight.

In summary: truth, for a Christian is an absolute not a relative concept. God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (119:105), it must be the foundation for all that we do. False teaching is not something that just happens in other places or in the past, we must guard against it in the here and now and contend earnestly for our faith (Jude v3). **Amen.**

Song: StF 489 Knowing You Jesus

Sing/read /pray/proclaim the words.

All I once held dear, built my life upon
All this world reveres, and wars to own
All I once thought gain I have counted loss
Spent and worthless now, compared to this

*Knowing You, Jesus
Knowing You
There is no greater thing
You're my all, You're the best
You're my joy, my righteousness
And I love You, Lord*

Now my heart's desire is to know You more
To be found in You and known as Yours

To possess by faith what I could not earn
All-surpassing gift of righteousness

Knowing You, Jesus etc.

Oh, to know the power of Your risen life
And to know You in Your sufferings
To become like You in Your death, my
Lord
So with You to live and never die

Knowing You, Jesus

Knowing You

*There is no greater thing
You're my all, You're the best
You're my joy, my righteousness
And I love You, Lord*

Graham Kendrick (b1950)

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)

Lord, we come with our prayers for your world, our church and our own needs. We pray especially for the people

of Beirut, who are having to come to terms with the terrible explosion of chemicals. We bring to you, Lord, the thousands of people who were injured, the many grieving families who lost loved ones. We thank you that the hospitals and rescue volunteers are all working together. We thank you for the offers of help and support from their neighbours and many other nations. Lord, in your mercy **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the worldwide demonstrations and unrest amongst the black community. Every person is your child, whatever their colour or creed. May good come out of despair and hope for a better future for all nations. Lord, in your mercy **hear our prayer.**

We bring our government to you in prayer, especially Boris Johnson as decisions are taken to lessen the lockdown. We are sad that lockdown has been reinforced in Aberdeen and continues in other parts of England. We pray that Ministers of State may listen to you and be guided into the easing of the difficult situation. Lord, in your mercy **hear our prayer.**

We continue to pray for a production of a vaccine for Covid-19, so that we all can be vaccinated to prevent the development and spread of the virus. We continue to pray for all surgeons, doctors, nurses and frontline workers who have had to deal with very distressing situations. They have all worked tirelessly. We pray for renewed strength and peace for all staff in hospitals, care homes and the community. Lord, in your mercy **hear our prayer.**

We pray for families where there will be conflict and abuse during the school holidays. We pray for the food banks that have to find extra parcels of food through a lack of school meals. Lord, keep the children safe and protect them from harm. Lord, in your mercy **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the Stewards in our two churches, as decisions are made about their reopening. We pray for new Stewards at Bransgore. Please put it on someone's heart to offer to help. We pray for ourselves to be open to your voice and to be obedient to do your will. Be with all who are unwell, undergoing treatment or with health problems.

Bless our families and keep each one of us safe from the Coronavirus. Lord, in your mercy **hear our prayer.**

We offer these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Pam Sturtridge Bransgore Worship Leader.

Additional Prayer for the people of Beirut

God of refuge,
hear our prayer
as we hold the people of Beirut
in our hearts at this time.
Fill us with compassion
and move us to reach out in love.
In your mercy,
bring comfort to those who mourn,
healing to those who are injured,
shelter to those who are homeless
sustenance to those who hunger.

Give strength to those who are working
to rebuild shattered lives,
and protect those who are vulnerable
especially in a time of coronavirus.

Lead us in your ways
so that together we may bring
the light of new hope
wherever there is destruction and despair.
We ask this through Christ our Lord,
Amen.

Hymn: StF 364 O for a thousand tongues to sing. Sing/read /pray/proclaim.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-dEfvz6Vms>

O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace!

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease,
'tis music in the sinner's ears,
'tis life and health and peace.

He speaks, and, listening to His voice,
New life the dead receive,
The mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
The humble poor believe.

My gracious Master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim,
To spread through all the earth abroad,
The honours of Thy name.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Blessing: Now may the God of peace,
who through the blood of the eternal
covenant brought back from the dead our
Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the
sheep, equip you with everything good for
doing his will, and may he work in us what
is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to
whom be glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Until we meet again, God bless. Phillip
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are external resources and are provided to help you engage
with the songs. Singing the Faith and Hymns and Psalms
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