



Highcliffe and Bransgore **Methodist Churches**

Sunday 30th August 2020, 10:30am, RNLI Sunday

Prepared by Rev'd Phillip Dixon

We have designated today as RNLI Sunday and we shall be celebrating and giving thanks for the work they do in saving many people from the “perils of the sea”. The Royal National Lifeboat Institution is one of Britain’s best loved charities¹ and operates primarily through the sacrifice of volunteers and the donations of the public. Our Bible reading today from Matthew’s Gospel helps us to appreciate the selflessness of the volunteers and the saving nature of their work.



Opening Prayer:

Heavenly Father, as we join in worship with others this morning, help us to remember that you are with us by the presence of your Holy Spirit. Open our hearts to receive your love; help us to hear you speaking to us. Speak especially to those who do not yet know you as their Lord and Saviour and may have questions. Fill our hearts with thankfulness for those who make sacrifices to help others. Lord, may everything we do and say today be to your glory. In Jesus’ name we pray.

Amen

Proclamation:

God has given us both his promise and his oath, two things we can completely count on, for it is impossible for God to tell a lie. Now all those who flee to him to save them can take new courage when they Hear such assurances from God; now they

can know without doubt that he will give them the salvation he has promised them. This certain hope of being saved is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls, connecting us with God himself behind the sacred curtains of heaven.

Amen. Hebrews 6:18,19 The Living Bible

Song: Oh, the Deep Deep Love of Jesus

Sing/read /pray/proclaim the words.

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

[lpAg](#) to the tune Ebenezer (Williams).

O the deep, deep love of Jesus
Vast, unmeasured, boundless, free,
rolling as a mighty ocean
in its fullness over me.
Underneath me, all around me,
is the current of thy love;
leading onward, leading homeward,
to thy glorious rest above.

¹ YouGov poll 2018

O the deep, deep love of Jesus!
Love of every love the best:
'tis an ocean vast of blessing,
'tis a haven sweet of rest.
how he watches o'er his loved ones,
died to call them all his own;
how for them he intercedeth,
watcheth o'er them from the throne.

O the deep, deep love of Jesus
Spread his praise from shore to shore;
how he loveth, ever loveth,
changeth never, nevermore;

O the deep, deep love of Jesus
'tis a heaven of heavens to me;
and it lifts me up to glory,
for it lifts me up to Thee.

Samuel Trevor Francis (1834-1925)

Prayer of confession:

*Ezra cried out, "O my God, I am ashamed;
I blush to lift up my face to you, for our
sins are piled higher than our heads and
our guilt is as boundless as the heavens.*

Ezra 9:6 The Living Bible

Loving Father, you have shown the way of life for us in your beloved Son Jesus; we confess our slowness to learn of him; our failure to follow him and our reluctance to bear the cross.

In your mercy Lord, forgive us.

We confess that we have not acted in love and goodness towards others; that there are things which cause us shame and regret; broken relationships we have not attempted to repair; lost opportunities when we should have spoken out for you but we have been silent and doubted the power of your Spirit to sustain us.

In your mercy Lord, forgive us.

We confess that we forget to look to you in hope and expectancy for new life and inspiration and we so easily lose the sense of the wonder and power of the Gospel.

In your mercy Lord, forgive us.

Gracious God, reform our will, reinforce our courage, and create in us a new heart. Help us to know and to rejoice in your forgiveness. Open our hearts to new beginnings and help us to live in the light of your love and the power of the Holy Spirit.

In your mercy Lord, forgive us.

Generous God, you have blessed us with much, we are sorry for the way we abuse your financial and material blessings. Help us to be more supportive to those in need particularly to those organisations like the RNLI who dedicate themselves to the saving of lives at sea. All good things come from You O Lord and of Your own do we give You.

By keeping a time of silence, we name in our hearts the sins for which we repent of and ask God's forgiveness for.

Personal Assurance of Forgiveness:

Loving and forgiving God. Your Grace is an unmerited gift to me each and every day. You are rich in mercy and as I resolve to live a life closer to You I give thanks for Your forgiveness for my weaknesses and errors and pray that Your Holy Spirit will strengthen and guide me in the days ahead. Fill me afresh today Lord with Your power light, love, generosity and kindness so that my life may always reflect Your wondrous glory **Amen.**

Prayer of confession based on a prayer originally contributed by Christine Stuckey. *All good things...* 1 Chronicles 29:14.

Preparation for the reading and preaching of scripture:

Lord, we pray that You prepare our hearts like fertile soil for the reading of Your Word. Speak to us afresh today through this reading. May the accompanying preaching notes stir us and awaken us and enable us to be the servant of all, spreading life, hope and love into a world of darkness, despair and anxiety.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 25: 31-45

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

⁴⁰ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of

these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

⁴⁴ “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

⁴⁵ “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

New International Version

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

Preaching notes:

Many of the parables that Jesus told needed some explanation. This account however from Jesus is unlike a parable but is much more to be considered as prophesy -a foretelling of actual events to come. In much the same way as when Jesus said: “destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up”, he was prophesying his coming death and resurrection, which we know to be true. This prophesy is telling of what will happen at the end of the age and the judgement of people (verses 31-33) it is equally true but not yet fulfilled.

This prophesy comes at the end of a significant period of teaching in Jerusalem from Jesus two days before the Passover

at which he would be betrayed, he uses the parables of the unfaithful servant, the ten bridesmaids and the talents to teach his message which then lead to our passage today. William Barclay the renowned Bible expositor states “the lesson is crystal clear; God will judge us according to our reaction to human need”. The sheep and the goats being divided (v33) are not along the lines of where they spent their Sunday mornings - no, it is more their reaction to human need. The contrast is between those who talk compassion and those who do it, and more than just doing, Jesus is talking of the reason for doing. Compare someone who helps another for what they can get from them to one who helps with no thought of self, they have both done a good deed which helps another but the one who does it from expecting nothing in return cannot be compared to the one who did it for a selfish reason. Jesus knows our hearts motivations and they will be accounted for on the day he comes (v31).

To be compassionate, loving, generous and selfless are essential Christian attributes. Christians -those who are truly considered to be Christ-like or like Christ- have these attributes in abundance and flowing out of them will respond to need (clothes, food etc.), never as an ulterior motive but always out of love for another, this is real and genuine faith. There will be others who portray an outward facade of being a Christian and who may also respond in a similar way but their faith is fake. Those on Jesus’ left -the goats – only become apparent at this last day because Jesus knows our motivations, it is not just doing the right thing – as can be a show- it is having the heart behind it.

Good and selfless deeds can of course be done by all, not just Christians. When people say: “Actually I’m a pretty good person, I don’t need to do any of that trusting in Jesus” the difficulty is that whilst good in some respects we are all bad in others. Only a trust in Jesus fully reconciles us to the God who knows hearts and motivations and answers prayers, who ultimately saves lives and forgives us our sins, giving us strength to not only save a precious life in this world but to save a life from the what we read at verse 41. A life plucked from death and saved for eternity. **Amen**

A message about the RNLI: As more people are, through necessity, holidaying in the UK our coastal resorts are becoming far busier. The story below is the account of Veronika and Rory who were rescued by the Weston-Super-Mare lifeboat when a simple beach walk went wrong. “The water started rising really really fast. It was knee height then waist height and then the waves swept us into the open sea. We were in big trouble. The water was so strong, but we started trying to swim, I thought that if I didn’t get to the beach I would die. There were waves coming from behind me and taking me down under the water, choking and drowning. And then there was this moment when I could feel I was giving up because I didn’t have any more strength. And then the lifeboat showed up and I was like: “What is this miracle?” I’m so grateful. They saved our lives.”

A local group of the RNLI meet monthly at Highcliffe Methodist Church to fundraise and plan events, this has all had to stop. The annual funday alone, which has been cancelled, used to raise £23,000.

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 the evil one.
For Thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory are Yours,
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Lifeboat Prayer:

Merciful Father, all things in heaven and
earth are held within Your loving care,
look with favour upon the Royal National
Lifeboat Institution.

Protect and bless the crews of all
its lifeboats, lifeguards and all who risk
their own safety to bring help to others.
Guide all who work for the Institution as
volunteers, supporters or staff, that they
may be faithful to the vision of its
founders, so that it may always be seen as
a beacon of hope and light to those who
find themselves in peril on the seas.

Through the same Jesus Christ, to whom
with You and the Holy Spirit be honour
and glory, now and forever. **Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession:

*This is the confidence we have in
approaching God: that if we ask anything
according to his will, he hears us. And if
we know that he hears us—whatever we
ask—we know that we have what we
asked of him.* ¹ John 5:14,15.

Gracious God, we bring our prayers for
the work of the RNLI. We pray for all of
the volunteers who risk their own lives to
save the lives of those in desperate need.
For the storms they endure on our behalf
we ask Lord that you protect them and
bless them. We pray in particular for the
men and women of the Mudeford,
Lymington and Yarmouth lifeboat crews
and the lifeguards.

We pray for the RNLI to receive the funds
that they need to continue this vital
lifesaving work, that new and innovative
ways of fundraising can be found to
recover what has been lost during the
lockdown and the effects of social
distancing.

We pray for our leaders, local, national
and church, to exercise wisdom and
integrity as they make decisions about our
future. Lord, give us leaders such that
their actions will be for Your glory to give
us victory over fear and anxiety,

As we are reminded of the devastation
wrought upon the Muslim community of
Christchurch New Zealand following the
sentencing of the individual who carried
out such an evil act against innocent
people, we pray for peace and comfort in
their mourning.

We bring our prayers of peace and
reconciliation for the anger and tensions
that have been enflamed by the events in
the United States. We pray relief from
pain and healing for Jacob Blake and other
injured. Lord, you created all men to be
equal whatever the colour of their skin
and all are loved by You. We pray against
the evil of racism and language of division.

Lord, we pray for the country of Lebanon
and in particular Beirut which suffered

from the devastating blast on 4th August. For the many bereaved families and for the injured we pray for relief and comfort. On behalf of the many thousands of homeless we pray for the agencies and organisations involved in the rebuilding efforts. Lord, for the damaged hospitals and the injured and overworked medics, bring strength, we pray that there will not be a serious outbreak of the Covid virus in this country.

For those we know personally in our families, among our friends and church communities who are struggling with serious medical conditions, Lord bring relief from suffering. For those remembering the anniversaries of the death of loved ones bring comfort and for those who suffer from depression, loneliness, despair or are caught in the trap of addictions we pray for release.

Loving God, we bring these prayers to you and pray that Your will be done in every situation. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Hymn: StF 645 Will your anchor hold
Sing/read /pray/proclaim the words.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03wfrjh>

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
when the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
Will your anchor drift, or firm remain?

Refrain:
*We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll;
fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's
love!*

Will your anchor hold in the straits of fear,
when the breakers roar and the reef is near?

While the surges rage, and the wild winds blow,
Shall the angry waves then your bark overflow? *[Refrain]*

Will your anchor hold in the floods of death,
when the waters cold chill your latest breath?

On the rising tide you can never fail,
while your anchor holds within the veil.
[Refrain]

Will your eyes behold through the morning light
the city of gold and the harbour bright?
Will you anchor safe by the heavenly shore,
when life's storms are past for evermore?
[Refrain]

Blessing: Now may the Lord of Peace Himself give you peace at all times in all ways, the Lord be with you all. **Amen**

Donate to the RNLI: Online by visiting www.rnli.org/stilloncall, by telephone by calling 0300 300 0104 or by sending a cheque to FREEPOST RNLI, West Quay Rd, Poole, BH15 1HZ. Your donation will save lives in so many ways, last year for every £1 donated, 53p was spent on lifeboats, property and equipment, 27p on running the lifeboat service, 12p on lifeguard rescue, 6p on safety and education and 2p on international drowning prevention.

Until we meet again, God bless. Phillip
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