

**THE BRIDE VALLEY CHURCHES:**

**Telephone Service for Sunday 9 July 2023 – 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity**

The service can be accessed by phone on Sunday morning on **01308 293062**.

Welcome to this act of worship for the Bride Valley Benefice for the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity, which has been put together by Liz Howlett and draws on liturgy from the Iona Community.

O God, you summon the day to dawn; you teach the morning to waken the earth.

**Great is your name, great is your love.**

For you the valleys will sing for joy, the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

**Great is your name, great is your love.**

To you the monarchs of earth shall bow, the poor and the persecuted shall shout for joy:

**Great is your name, great is your love.**

Your love and justice shall last for ever, fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise.

**Great is your name, great is your love.**

*Hymn: All creatures of our God and King*

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| 1 All creatures of our God and King<br>lift up your voice and with us sing<br>Alleluia, alleluia.<br>Thou burning sun with golden beam,<br>thou silver moon with softer gleam,<br><i>O praise him, O praise him,<br/>alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.</i> | 4 Dear mother earth, who day by day<br>unfoldest blessings on our way,<br>O praise him, alleluia.<br>The flowers and fruits that in thee grow,<br>let them his glory also show:<br><i>Chorus</i>          |
| 2 Thou rushing wind that art so strong,<br>ye clouds that sail in heaven along,<br>O praise him, alleluia.<br>Thou rising morn, in praise rejoice,<br>ye lights of evening, find a voice;<br><i>Chorus</i>   | 5 Let all things their Creator bless,<br>and worship him in humbleness;<br>O praise him, alleluia.<br>Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,<br>and praise the Spirit, Three in One;<br><i>Chorus</i> |
| 3 Thou flowing water, pure and clear,<br>make music for thy Lord to hear,<br>Alleluia, alleluia.<br>Thou fire so masterful and bright,<br>that givest hearts both warmth and light:<br><i>Chorus</i>   | <i>St Martins Singers<br/>William Henry Draper (1855-1933)<br/>(Public Domain)</i>  |

*Prayer of Confession and Absolution*

In the beauty of the earth, in the silence of our hearts, in the community of your church, in all acts of grace and kindness, in forgiving from the heart and in worship from the soul, your Spirit confirms the truth in which we seek to live.

If knowing this, we have failed to love you, our Maker, been hesitant to follow your Son, and suspected the power of your Spirit, Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

If we have desired comfort more than devotion and if we have satisfied our wants more than we have served your will, Christ have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

If we have limited our company to those like us and if we have restricted our conversation to matters of no consequence, Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

May the God of love bring us back to himself, forgive us our sins, and assure us of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

*The Collect*

Almighty God, send down upon your Church the riches of your Spirit, and kindle in all who minister the gospel your countless gifts of grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*First Reading*

**Psalm 145: 8-15**

The Lord is gracious and merciful, long-suffering and of great goodness. The Lord is loving to everyone and his mercy is over all his creatures. All your works praise you, O Lord, and your faithful servants bless you. They tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your mighty power, to make known to all peoples your mighty acts and the glorious splendour of your

kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; your dominion endures throughout all ages. The Lord is sure in all his words and faithful in all his deeds. The Lord upholds all those who fall and lifts up those who are bowed down.

*Gospel Reading*

**Matthew 11: 16-19; 25 - end**

Jesus said, 'But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market-places and calling to one another, "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn." For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon", the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!" Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.'

At that time Jesus said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'

*Reflection*

How do we learn? How do we humans learn how to do something? If a child asked you if they could learn to swim, how would you go about helping them to achieve this goal? Would you give them a book to read about all the different swimming strokes? Would you take them to the pool to watch how others were swimming and hope that they would pick it up that way? Neither of these will turn them into actual, let alone, confident swimmers. The child has to get into the water themselves... they need to learn how the water feels on their body... they need to experience their body being supported by the water – nothing you do on land can prepare you for that sensation or how to respond to it. You have to commit yourself to stand any chance of learning the skill.

One of the main themes of the gospel passage we have heard today is about learning. We can hear Jesus' exasperation with the people who come only so far to listen or watch either himself or John the Baptist: in the end, however, they aren't prepared to learn, or act on what they hear. These are people who stay on the edge and criticise both John and Jesus for their eating and drinking habits. On the one hand they disapprove of John because he doesn't eat and drink enough in their opinion and on the other, they throw insults at Jesus because he enjoys his food and drink and the company who gather round him at the feasts. To return to the swimming theme, it is as if these are people who criticise one person in the pool for swimming on their front, and criticise the next person in the pool because they are swimming on their back. You can't please these people, who of course are staying on the edge of the pool and keeping dry – they are not prepared to enter the water – they are not prepared to commit themselves. If they ever do want to learn, they will need to get wet themselves. This kind of behaviour does remind me of teenagers who turn down every suggestion for an activity – everything you can think of is so boring – yet they cannot bring anything to mind that they **would** like to do!

The theme of learning continues later in the gospel passage, when Jesus offers his invitation to any who might be listening. He says 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me...'

This was a passage from the Bible much loved by Adela Curtis, the founder of the first community that lived where Othona is based now. She of course knew it and quoted it from the King James Version, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find Rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

She viewed the whole of the life lived in the community as being about coming to Christ and learning from him. She called their way of life at Burton Mere The Yoke – this meant that the housework and the work in the garden were understood to be worship, just as much as the time spent in the chapel. It was also about acknowledging that we are learners – we don't know it all. In fact, she said that we often have to unlearn what we think we do know, in order to learn and grow and flourish, perhaps in new ways. This can be seen as being like a pilgrim – stepping out into the unknown, letting go of what we have built up around us, being open to the new possibilities ahead.

For Adela Curtis, Christ's yoke referred to the relationship that Jesus had with His heavenly Father. We can see that relationship explored in the few verses before Jesus talks about his yoke, 'All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.' And there are other gospel passages where we hear Jesus say, 'I do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me, I speak these things' and again 'I am come down from heaven, not to do Mine own Will, but the Will of Him that sent me.' The invitation to us therefore is to draw close to Christ to learn from him, as he learns from the Father. We can't learn how a yoke feels by looking at it from a distance – we need to draw near and commit ourselves. Could we imagine a triple yoke perhaps – God the father in one, with Jesus next, learning from God and then us in the third one, learning from Jesus. This image may or may not work for you – don't worry if it doesn't.

Adela Curtis says this in conclusion: 'If we take His Yoke and learn of Him, He will correct all our ways of working and resting, and we shall be so changed that our work will become True Rest, and our rest will become True Work, because both will be transformed into 'means of grace' in Holy Communion with His Spirit.'

Finally, I offer a prayer written by Adela Curtis that she used at the end of an address on this topic. The prayer consists of four sentences (which can be found on Source to Sea). Do join me in saying this prayer if you wish. There will be a short pause between each sentence...

**I come to Thee that I may Love the Lord my God with all my heart.**

**I take thy Yoke that I may Love the Lord my God with all my soul.**

**I learn of Thee that I may Love the Lord my God with all my mind.**

**I rest in Thee that I may Love the Lord my God with all my strength in earth as in heaven. Amen.**

*Hymn Love divine, all loves excelling*

1 Love divine, all loves excelling,  
joy of heaven to earth come down,  
fix in us thy humble dwelling,  
all thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesu, thou art all compassion  
pure, unbounded love thou art;  
visit us with thy salvation,  
enter every trembling heart

2 Come, almighty to deliver,  
let us all thy grace receive;  
suddenly return, and never,  
never more thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
serve thee as thy hosts above,  
pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,  
glory in thy perfect love.

- 3 Finish then thy new creation,  
pure and spotless let us be;  
let us see thy great salvation,  
perfectly restored in thee:  
Changed from glory into glory,  
till in heaven we take our place,  
till we cast our crowns before thee,  
lost in wonder, love, and praise!

*St Martins Singer*  
*Charles Wesley (1707-1788)*

*(Public Domain)*

### *Prayers*

Let us pray  
May it not be long, Lord...

May it not be long, Lord, before the world we  
pray for and the world we inhabit are one.

May it not be long before the earth no longer  
suffers through human selfishness, so that the  
valleys can sing again, the meadows laugh and  
barren places burst into bloom.

**May it not be long.**

May it not be long, Lord, before the domination  
of wealth over want, male over female, white

over black, the privileged over the poor, be facts  
of history, not facts of life.

**May it not be long.**

May it not be long, Lord, before spears are  
turned into pruning forks and all the peoples of  
the world are able to live in peace and harmony  
with one another.

**May it not be long.**

May it not be long, Lord, before we vacate the  
places of fear and anxiety and find wells of hope  
and peace, deeper than shallow pools of  
optimism.

**May it not be long.**

*The Lord's Prayer*

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray  
**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**

*Closing Responses*

From where we are, to where you need us,

**Jesus, now lead on.**

From the familiarity of what we know to the wonder of what you will reveal,

**Jesus, now lead on.**

To transform the fabric of this world until it resembles the shape of your kingdom,

**Jesus, now lead on.**

Because good things have been prepared for those who love God,

**Jesus, now lead on.**

*Blessing*

May God give to you and to all peoples God's comfort and peace and light and joy, in this world and the next; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you now and always. **Amen.**

*Hymn: Go forth and tell*

1. Go forth and tell! O church of God, awake!  
God's saving news to all the nations take;  
proclaim Christ Jesus, saviour, Lord, and king,  
that all the world his glorious praise may sing.
2. Go forth and tell! God's love embraces all;  
he will in grace respond to all who call:  
how shall they call if they have never heard  
the gracious invitation of his word?
3. Go forth and tell! The doors are open wide:  
share God's good gifts-let no one be denied;  
live out your life as Christ your Lord shall choose,  
your ransomed powers for his sole glory use.
4. Go forth and tell! O church of God, arise!  
go in the strength which Christ your Lord supplies;  
go till all nations his great name adore  
and serve him, Lord and king for evermore.

*St Martins Singers*  
*James E Seddon (1915-1983)*  
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