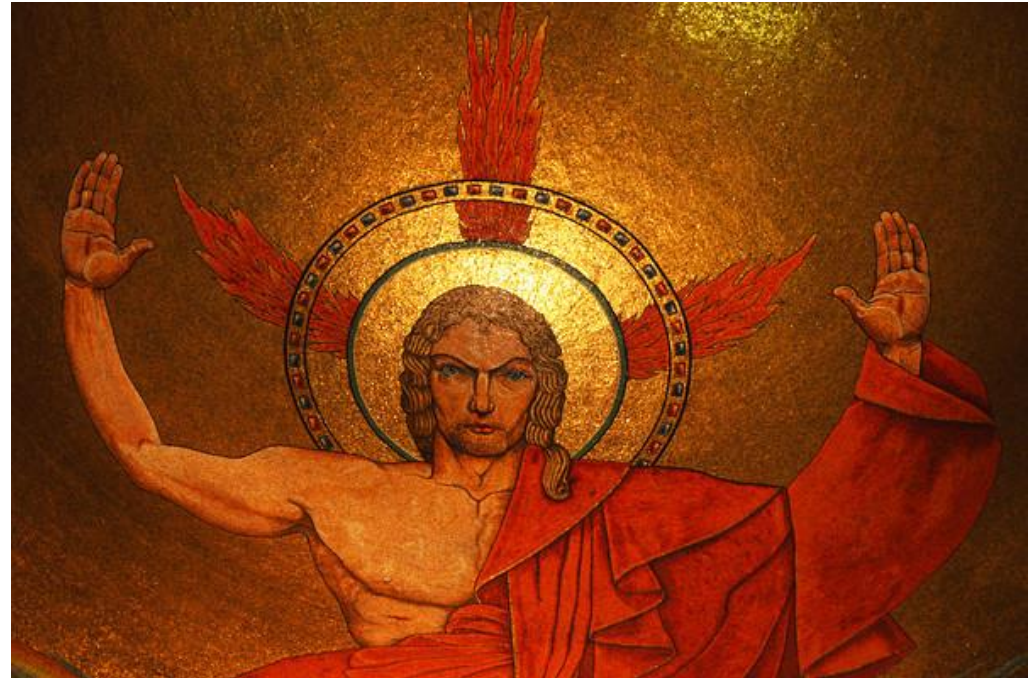


URC Sunday Daily Devotion  
Worship for Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2020



**The Rev'd Jayne Taylor**

**Introduction**

Hello, my name is Jayne and until recently I was minister to three churches in the Cotswolds. At present I'm on Sabbatical and speaking from my home in Cirencester.

**Call to Worship**

The wisdom of God calls to us, from the heights, along the paths, and at the crossroads. Come into God's presence to worship, sing, and pray.

**From our scattered places we come. Let us worship God.**

**Hymn:** *Gather Us In*

Marty Haugen 1982 © GIA Publications

Here in this place,  
new light is streaming,  
now is the darkness  
vanished away.  
See, in this space,  
our fears and our dreamings,  
brought here to you  
in the light of this day.  
Gather us in the lost & forsaken,  
gather us in the blind & the lame.  
Call to us now,  
and we shall awaken,  
we shall arise  
at the sound of our name.

2: We are the young  
our lives are a mystery,  
we are the old  
who yearn for your face.  
We have been sung  
throughout all of history,  
called to be light  
to the whole human race.  
Gather us in  
the rich and the haughty,  
gather us in  
the proud and the strong.  
Give us a heart  
so meek and so lowly,  
give us the courage  
to enter the song.

3: Here we will take  
the wine and the water,  
here we will take  
the bread of new birth.  
Here you shall call  
your sons and your daughters,  
call us anew  
to be salt for the earth.  
Give us to drink  
the wine of compassion,  
give us to eat  
the bread that is you.  
Nourish us well,  
and teach us to fashion  
lives that are holy  
and hearts that are true.

4: Not in the dark  
of buildings confining,  
not in some heaven,  
light years away,  
but here in this place,  
the new light is shining;  
now is the Kingdom,  
now is the day.  
Gather us in and hold us forever,  
gather us in & make us your own.  
Gather us in all peoples  
together,  
fire of love  
in our flesh and our bone.

## Sources, Copyright and Thanks

### Sources

Call To Worship from *Worship Aids for the Revised Common Lectionary from the Presbyterian Church of the USA*

Affirmation of Faith from selected sections of the *Belhar Confession of Faith*.

Blessing from *Encircled in Prayer* by Jan Berry

All other prayers by Jayne Taylor

### Copyright and Performance

*Here in This Place* by Marty Haugen (b1950) © 1982 GIA Publications sung by the composer.

*Brother Sister Let Me Serve* you by Richard Gillard (b 1953) © Integrity Music Inc, sung on the BBC's *Songs of Praise*.

*Lord of Creation* by Jack Copley Winslow performed by Song leaders from Granite Bay and Sacramento Central Seventh-Day Adventist Churches

*When I needed a Neighbour* by Sydney Carter sung by Dominic Kelly and the St Martins Church Choir on the BBC's *Songs of Praise*.

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Thanks To...

Jonnie Hill and Adam Scott, Ruth and Kingsley Browning, Phil, Lythan and Carys Nevard for recording the Call to Worship and Affirmation of Faith, and to John Young, Kathleen Haynes, Carol Tubbs, Anne Hewling, and John Wilcox for recording other spoken parts of the service.

Opening Organ Piece Prelude in E Minor by Johann Sebastian Bach (organ of The Spire Church, Farnham – 2020) Closing: Trumpet Voluntary in D by John Baston (organ of Basilica Santo Spirito, Florence, Italy – 2016) Both played by Brian Cotterill. <http://briancotterill.webs.com>

## Prayers of Confession and Forgiveness

Loving Gracious God. You are the one true God, there is no other, almighty Creator, merciful Christ, everlasting Comforter. You alone are worth our worship. Everything we have, everything we experience, everyone we know comes from you.

Yet Lord, we acknowledge our ungratefulness and confess that we all fall short of your purposes for us. If we say we are without fault, we deceive ourselves and, we deceive you. And Lord we accept responsibility for the consequences of sin in this world, for all the pain and the suffering, for all the injustice.

We admit that we have hurt others, sometimes deliberately, and by doing so, have hurt you. We have also contributed to the pain and suffering of others by our silence and our inaction.

Lord, we cry out to you for forgiveness. And even though we don't deserve your love and your forgiveness, you give it to us. Help us to accept your forgiveness, your gift of grace given freely to us. We thank you and praise you because at the very heart of your character is love. And that love was shown to us by and through your son, Jesus Christ, and as he taught us, so we now pray...

Our Father...

### Readings

*Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18*

The LORD said to Moses, speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.

'Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favouritism to the great, but judge your neighbour fairly.

'Do not go about spreading slander among your people.' Do not do anything that endangers your neighbour's life. I am the LORD.

'Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbour frankly so that you will not share in his guilt.

'Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the LORD.

*St Matthew 22:34-46*

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 'Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?' He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'" This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.'

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: 'What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?' They said to him, 'The son of David.' He said to them, 'How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet'"?'

If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?' No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

6: Wherever you travel, I'll be there, I'll be there.

Wherever you travel, I'll be there.

And the creed and the colour  
And the name won't matter,  
I'll be there.

### **Blessing**

May the God in whose image we are made,  
Strengthen us in our struggle,  
Embrace us in our weakness,  
And inspire us with hope for a different future:  
As we work, separately and together  
For the freedom of the whole creation.  
Amen

those who can only love themselves  
those for whom bitterness and hatred reign

Compassionate God,

We pray for those who give totally of themselves for the sake of others

those who are persecuted or outcast

those who face prejudice because of the colour of their skin,

those who face discrimination because of their gender

those who face harassment for their sexuality

Merciful God,

help us to strive to see others as you see us,

help us to reach out in love to our neighbour

help us to live as Christ would have us live

help us to walk the way of Jesus

As we ask these things in his name, Amen.

**Hymn:** *When I needed a Neighbour*

Sydney Carter © 1965 Stainer & Bell,

When I needed a neighbour,  
were you there,  
were you there? (repeat)

*And the creed and the colour  
and the name won't matter,  
Were you there?*

2: I was hungry and thirsty,  
were you there,  
were you there?

3: I was cold, I was naked,  
Were you there, were you  
there?

4: When I needed a shelter  
Were you there, were you  
there?

5: When I needed a healer,  
Were you there, were you  
there?

**Hymn:** *Brother, Sister Let Me Serve You*

Richard Gillard (b 1953) © Integrity Music Inc

Brother, sister,  
let me serve you;  
let me be as  
Christ to you;  
pray that I may  
have the grace  
to let you be  
my servant too.

2. We are pilgrims  
on a journey,  
and companions  
on the road;  
we are here to  
help each other  
walk the mile  
and bear the load.

5. When we sing to God in heaven, we shall find such harmony,  
born of all we've known together of Christ's love and agony.

**Sermon**

I guess we all have our own image of what Jesus is like. To many, he's white, European looking with shoulder length brown hair and piercing blue eyes. I guess all of us see Jesus as we think he ought to look. I remember spending time in India a few years ago, and on one occasion I ventured into a Hindu Temple. The first thing my eyes laid upon was a picture of Jesus. It was the Sacred Heart painting, if you know what I

3. I will hold  
the Christlight for you  
in the night time  
of your fear;  
I will hold my  
hand out to you,  
speak the peace  
you long to hear.

4. I will weep  
when you are weeping;  
when you laugh  
I'll laugh with you;  
I will share your joy  
and sorrow,  
till we've seen this  
journey through.

mean. Here was a very Western-looking Jesus surrounded by very Indian imagery. It was quite a shock.

Today I hope I can challenge some of our assumptions about Jesus; his mission and his character.

To put the Matthew reading in its context, we should really start in the previous chapter. Jesus arrives in Jerusalem, on a donkey, crowds cheering, palms waving. And what's the first thing he does? He confronts the moneychangers in the temple courts, overturns their tables and tells them to get out.

Surely not gentle Jesus, meek and mild, as the hymn goes...

He starts healing and preaching and the chief priests and elders confront him. "'By what authority are you doing these things?' they ask. In other words, 'Just who do you think you are?'"

Jesus responds with three parables that directly attack their leadership. He tells them to their faces that the Kingdom of heaven will be taken away from people like them and given to a people who will produce its fruit.

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild...

The Pharisees try to trap Jesus by asking him if it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar. If he says it is right to pay taxes, then they will accuse him of betraying his people by agreeing to finance the Roman oppression. If he says it is wrong to pay taxes, he will be charged with tax evasion and sedition. What does he do? He asks them to show him a Roman coin and asks them whose face is on it. They have a coin, Jesus doesn't. The coin bears Caesar's image, of course, probably Tiberius, and the inscription would have read: "son of the divine Augustus" They are immediately undone by showing him that they are carrying around an

Do you believe that God is the One who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people. **We do.**

Do you believe that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor, and the wronged? **We do.**

This is the faith of the Church! We are proud to confess it in Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Offertory**

Loving God we thank you for the many blessings you give us. We owe you everything we have. Help us to in turn to give back a token of your love for us in the giving of our time, our efforts and also in our offering, as we seek to love our neighbour as we do ourselves. May our money be used wisely, we ask, in Jesus' name. Amen

### **Intercessory Prayers**

Gracious God,  
as your Jesus reached out to those on the margins,  
so now in our prayers we do likewise:  
We pray for all who have little love in their lives  
those who are lonely and isolated,  
those who are addicted and feel trapped,  
those who grieve and mourn,  
those whose relationships have been shattered.

Loving God,  
We pray for those who love things which are unhelpful  
those who worship their wealth or possessions, and where greed  
has taken over,  
those who find love only in the approval of others, in flattery, or in  
power,

out of the kingdom of God. People who will sing 'all are welcome' in the church, when they mean 'people like us' are welcome in the church.

It's important, I think, that we see people as God sees people, and we need to see God in others; those from all the corners of this earth, those who society looks down upon, and sees as being 'less'. Only when we can do that can we say that we truly love the lord our God with all of our heart, our soul and our mind.

**Hymn:** *Lord of Creation*  
Jack Copley Winslow (1882-1974)

Lord of creation,  
to you be all praise!  
Most mighty your working,  
most wondrous your ways!  
Your glory and might  
are beyond us to tell,  
and yet in the heart  
of the humble you dwell.

2: Lord of all power,  
I give you my will,  
in joyful obedience  
your tasks to fulfill.  
Your bondage is freedom,  
your service is song;  
and, held in your keeping,  
my weakness is strong.

3: Lord of all wisdom, I give you my mind,  
rich truth that surpasses our knowledge to find.  
What eye has not seen and what ear has not heard  
is taught by your Spirit and shines from your Word.

### **Affirmation of Faith**

Do you believe in the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who gathers, protects, and cares for the Church through Word and Spirit. This God has done since the beginning of the world and will do to the end.

**We do**

idol, dedicated to a son of a god. Jesus tells them to render, literally to pay back to Caesar what is his and to render to God what is rightfully his. What is Caesar's, his taxes, what is God's, everything, our whole lives.

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild...

Next, the Sadducees try to trap him with a question about resurrection and the afterlife, they didn't believe in it, and he silences them.

Then the Pharisees have one more go at him, that's where we come in. You can see a pattern emerging here, I hope?

They ask him, "What is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Sounds like a reasonable question to ask you might think? But we know that they're trying to trap him, so what are they playing at?

In order to understand that, we have to think about just who the Pharisees were. They were a Jewish group who believed passionately in the Law, or Torah, and its application in every circumstance. In this respect, Jesus could easily have been part of that group. But they sometimes took this to extremes, and applied the Law as legal requirement, rather than as a gift of love from God.

Remember in John's gospel, it was the Pharisees who brought the woman caught in adultery to Jesus asking him whether she should be stoned. Their response would, no doubt, have been at odds with Jesus'. So, if you had to pick one Law which was the greatest, then loving God seems like a pretty safe bet, doesn't it?

It comes from Deuteronomy and is commonly called the Shema: "**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**". Every Jewish person would memorise the Shema as a child.

The Pharisees were obviously expecting this answer, so why was it a trap? I believe they were ready with a reply. I think they were going to say something like, “we love God by obeying all his commandments – why don’t you? Why do you challenge us? Do you not love God?” But before they have the chance, Jesus tells them what the second greatest commandment is. It is to **“love your neighbour as yourself”**, which comes from our **Leviticus** reading.

Jesus goes on to say that all of the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. In other words, without love for others *as well as* love for God, adherence to all the other laws was futile. In their endless arguments over which law took precedent over another in particular situations, they had left out the most important – love. And in the words of Peter, “love covers a multitude of sins”. It was a stinging attack on them.

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild...

As if that wasn’t enough, Jesus then asks them a question. Now this is bad news, for them at least. Whenever Jesus asks someone a question, you know that he is going to challenge their worldview.

He asks what seems to be a straightforward question, “whose son is the Messiah”. They reply that he is the son of David. Their assumption is that the Messiah would be like a warrior king, another David, who would lead them in battle against the Romans to free them from oppression. Jesus then gives a reply, which gets a little lost in translation but bear with me.

Jesus quotes Psalm 110, a Psalm attributed to David, as saying “the Lord said to my Lord”.

The point is that the first of the two Lords is God. But if the first Lord is God, then who is the second Lord in this verse? It cannot be a second

god, because the Hebrew Bible makes it clear that there is only one God. It cannot be David's son, because David would never refer to his own son as Lord. The only possibility, then, is that the second Lord of Psalm 110 is the Messiah of God, who is not David's son but David's Lord, someone greater than David.

Therefore, the Pharisees, these highly trained religious experts who tried to embarrass Jesus, are wrong when they answer that the Messiah is David's son.

This all sounds very technical and dry to us, but to the Pharisees it would have been an absolute bombshell. Could they be wrong about Messiah? It’s no wonder that from that day on, we are told, no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild...

The story doesn’t end there. If you read the next chapter of Matthew there is a section which is often described as the seven woes, because it’s a withering attack on the Pharisees in which seven times Jesus starts, “Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees”. In six of these outbursts, the next word is hypocrites! His charge is that they say one thing and do another, that their faith is skin deep, in other words.

You see, if we are to love God, then that love has to be real. And if that love is real, then it will naturally overflow into a love for our neighbour. In Luke’s account of this scripture, Jesus is asked “Who is my neighbour”, and goes on to give the parable of the Good Samaritan. Our neighbour is not only the person who lives next door to us or even those people we like. Anyone who is in need is our neighbour and is to be loved.

I believe there are Pharisee-like people, as Jesus saw them, in the Church today. These are the people who delight in declaring who is in and who is