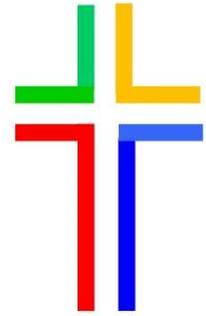


# Week St Mary Methodist Church – Sunday 17 May



Silence has always been a big part of spiritual practice, but many have never tried it! Solitude and silence can help us hear from God but we can easily lose sensitivity to that still, small voice in all that noise and activity of our lives. In silence, you realise how little you hear that voice most of the time. We have more silence than usual at present, perhaps it is an opportunity to hear more from God.

## PRAYER

Gracious and loving God, we know that You always keep Your promises. Through Jesus, You promised the gift of Your Holy Spirit, to be sent to all who put their trust in You. We come now to claim that promise. We know that by Your Spirit You are with us all the time. Help us to make this the time, for You to speak to us in

whatever way that You choose. Make us ready to hear through prayers, readings and music. Make us ready to feel Your presence in silence and in the smiles of those around us. Guide and direct us in all that we do and show Yourself to us in unexpected as well as in familiar ways. This we ask in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

## READING FOR TODAY 1 Peter 3:13-18

<sup>13</sup> Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? <sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. 'Do not fear their threats<sup>1</sup>; do not be frightened.'<sup>15</sup> But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup> keeping a clear conscience, so that

those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. <sup>17</sup> For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. <sup>18</sup> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.

## REFLECTION

Last year some of us did a course called Talking Jesus at the Chapel led by Paul Harold. The course was about talking to people about Jesus. Part of it showed us how to not be anxious when the opportunity arises to talk to somebody about Jesus. "What should I say?" "How should I say it?" "What are the right words?" A text from today's reading from 1 Peter 3 was a central text on the course: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. **But do this with gentleness and respect.....**"

'Always being prepared to give an answer' can conjure up the idea of someone, when put on the spot by a friend or workmate, suddenly pulling a long sermon out of their pocket and spending half an hour quoting Scripture verses; but it is far simpler than that. In a nutshell, this is a call to Christians to think about and to be able to say why having faith gives them hope. It doesn't have to be an involved, lengthy answer. We can make it hard by worrying that we'll get it wrong if anyone asks us. But really this is about telling our stories - how we found faith, how it has challenged us and changed us, and ultimately, how knowing Jesus gives us help and hope. However, this is to be done with gentleness and respect. In a world

of Internet trolling and anonymous texts, some people find it easy to sit at a computer screen and write messages of hate to people whom they will never meet, or who have different opinions or beliefs. There is much hate around at the moment.

On the Talking Jesus course we saw video examples of people talking naturally, of their own experience, just sharing of themselves. We saw the spectacular results from these simple, day-to-day actions. It was not complicated, it was not theological, it was not loud or shouty or confrontational, it was gentle and respectful. And most important of all, when we are talking to someone about Jesus, we were advised to rely on Jesus to do the work of changing lives, we are just planting a seed. The course really did take the pressure off us talking about Jesus, we learned to just say something, to talk about your own experience, however imperfect, and Jesus will do the rest.

### **HYMN**

*(H&P 378 STF 545, words from STF)*

Be thou my vision, oh Lord of my heart,  
Be all else but naught to me, save that  
thou art;  
Be thou my best thought in the day and  
the night,  
Both waking or sleeping, thy presence my  
light

Be Thou my wisdom, be Thou my true  
word,  
be thou ever with me, and I with thee,  
Lord;  
Thou my great Father thy child let me be;  
And thou in me dwelling, and I one with  
thee.

Riches I need not, nor earth's empty  
praise:  
Be thou my inheritance now and always;  
Be thou and thou only the first in my  
heart:  
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou  
art.

High king of heaven, thou heaven's bright  
sun,  
O grant me it's joys after victory is won;  
Great heart of my own heart, whatever,  
befall,  
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all

### **PRAYER FOR OTHERS**

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your  
mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress.

Sustain and support the anxious and fearful  
and lift-up all who are brought low.

Lord Jesus Christ, you taught us to love  
our neighbour, and to care for those in  
need, as if we were caring for you. In this  
time of anxiety, give us strength to  
comfort the fearful, to tend the sick, and  
to assure the isolated of our love.

God of compassion, be close to those who  
are ill, afraid or in isolation. In their  
loneliness, be their consolation; in their  
anxiety, be their hope.

Gracious God, give skill, sympathy and  
resilience to all who are caring for the  
sick, and your wisdom to those searching  
for a cure.

O God, help me to trust you, help me to  
know that you are with me, help me to  
believe that nothing can separate me  
from your love revealed in Jesus Christ our  
Lord. **Amen**

### **BLESSING**

Lord, give us opportunities to tell others  
about Jesus,  
And make us brave enough to speak for  
You.  
And the Blessing of God, Father Son and  
Holy Spirit,  
Be upon you and remain with you always.

*"You are the only Bible some unbelievers  
will ever read." - John MacArthur*