

# MATLOCK METHODIST/URC CHURCH

## Zoom Morning Worship

18<sup>th</sup> October 2020

### Welcome

**Hymn:** 1 All people that on earth do dwell

All people that on earth do dwell  
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice:  
Him serve with mirth his praise forth tell;  
Come ye before him and rejoice.

The Lord ye know is God indeed;  
Without our aid he did us make:  
We are his folk he doth us feed;  
And for his sheep he doth us take.

O enter then his gate with praise;  
Approach with joy his courts unto;  
Praise, laud, and bless his name always,  
For it is seemly so to do.

Loving God, we have come to worship you.

For why, the Lord our God is good;  
His mercy is for ever sure;  
His truth at all times firmly stood,  
And shall from age to age endure.

To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
The God whom heaven and earth adore,  
From earth and from the angel host  
Be Praise and glory evermore.

*William Kethe (d. 1594)*

**Help us to remember that you are here with us.  
May we pray to you in faith,  
sing your praise in our hearts,  
and listen to your word with eagerness;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

### Prayer of Praise and Adoration

Holy God, dwelling beyond time and space,  
source of all that is,  
patient in watching over creations change and  
transformation,  
giver of life on this fragile, fruitful planet,  
gifting it as our home,  
coming in Jesus, born of Mary, to share in our  
risky life,  
revealing by his words and deeds your good and  
loving way to life,  
suffering the consequences of our evil on the  
cross,

through the power of love raising him to life.

Lord, by your will Jesus comes again  
as friend and teacher, healer and life giver,  
encourager and challenger.  
So come, Holy God, Father, Son and Spirit,  
come to your whole church as we offer you our  
praise,  
as we open our hearts and minds to you.  
as we come as your servant people  
to be touched by your truth and love  
your forgiveness and new life.  
Come we ask it In Jesus name. Amen.

### Prayer of Confession

**God of mercy, your love for us is strong, but our love for you is weak.  
You call us to follow Jesus, but we are slow to obey.  
You care for all that you have made, but we ignore the needs of others**

**and misuse your creation.**

**We are sorry for our sins. Forgive us, and help us to please you by the way we live; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Jesus says, Your sins are forgiven.

**Amen. Thanks be to God.**

### **Hebrew Scripture: Isaiah 45. 1-7**

This is what the Lord says to his chosen one, to Cyrus, whose right hand I hold in order to subdue nations before him, and disarm kings, to open doors before him, so gates remain unclosed:

<sup>2</sup> I will go before you and level mountains. Bronze doors I will shatter and iron bars I will hack through.

<sup>3</sup> I will give you hidden treasures, riches stashed away in secret places, so you may recognize that I am the Lord, the one who calls you by name, the God of Israel.

<sup>4</sup> For the sake of my servant Jacob, Israel, my chosen one, I call you by name and give you a title of respect, even though you do not submit to me.

<sup>5</sup> I am the Lord, I have no peer, there is no God but me. I arm you for battle, even though you do not recognize me.

<sup>6</sup> I do this so people will recognize from east to west that there is no God but me; I am the Lord, I have no peer.

<sup>7</sup> I am the one who forms light and creates darkness; the one who brings about peace and creates calamity. I am the Lord, who accomplishes all these things.

### **Gospel Reading: Matthew 22. 15 - 22**

<sup>15</sup> Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. <sup>16</sup> So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. <sup>17</sup> Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? <sup>18</sup> But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? <sup>19</sup> Show me the coin used for the tax. And they brought him a denarius. <sup>20</sup> Then he said to them, Whose head is this, and whose title? <sup>21</sup> They answered, The emperors. Then he said to them, Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperors, and to God the things that are Gods. <sup>22</sup> When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

### **Sermon**

Someone says, Do you think God has sent this plague of Covid 19 in order to teach us a lesson? I wonder what we think or how we reply? The question raises that age-long cry when people are in trouble: Where is God in all this. That cry was uttered over 2,500 years ago by those who had seen their holy city, Jerusalem, left in ruins and many of her leading citizens taken into captivity in Babylon. Why did God let it happen? Does he really care for us? Why doesn't he lift a finger to help us? We may have asked the same questions in our own lives.

A ten minute sermon can provide no more than a few ways in which we can grow in understanding.

### **First, the God who is good**

The prophet declares:

***I am the one who forms light.***

***I am who brings about peace.***

Isaiah certainly believed in a God who desires what is good. He was convinced that God's good purpose was to set free the Jewish prisoners in Babylon so that they could return to their holy city, Jerusalem. Looking around the world he dared to believe that God was intending to work for the good of Israel through the growing power of King Cyrus. He saw in the Persian King, Cyrus, his instrument for setting captive Israel free:

***This is what the Lord says to his chosen one,  
to Cyrus, whose right hand I hold  
in order to subdue nations before him,  
and disarm kings,  
to open doors before him...  
I will go before you!***

Cyrus did, indeed, set the prisoners free.

What we see here is God working for good but doing so through a man who has a vision of life which, at least in part, is at one with God's will for Israel. Today, we look around our country and world and ask, Who are those leaders who, at least in part, share in God's vision of the kind of world he wants. It's a pressing question for the electors of America as they decide who, by word and deed, expresses God's will for the world and their own nation?

In terms of our present pandemic, where do we see God at work? Perhaps we think of those working on the Covid wards of our hospitals? Perhaps we think of research scientists in Cambridge and around the world creating new vaccines and innovative ways of treating the sick? Perhaps we think of politicians honestly struggling with the conflicting needs of people at risk and their economy. In them God works for good!

### **Secondly, the God who permits evil**

You probably spotted I only quoted part of what Isaiah says about the nature of God. The whole goes like this:

***I am the one who forms light  
and creates darkness;  
the one who brings about peace  
and creates calamity.  
I am the Lord, who accomplishes all these things.***

Can the God of love, the God we meet in Jesus also be the God of darkness and calamity? Can the God through whom all things have come be also be the God who is ultimately responsible for evil? One helpful thought may be to speak of a God who is not only the source of all that is good but also the God who gives freedom - to his creation and to us.

Freedom gives the possibility of choice and choice raises the possibility of things going wrong even terribly wrong! God does not desire that Covid 19 exists. Nor does God desire that people become ill or that politicians act recklessly with their people's health. Yet God permits that which is opposed to his will but evil will not have power for ever!

We remember that Jesus and the first Christians were confident that God combats evil now and will ultimately destroy it. There will be a new heaven and a new earth and evil will be no more! So hear this: God is at war with the evil he permits!

### **Finally, where does this leave us?**

We recognise that God allows evil to exist because he is the God who has given freedom to his world and to us. Nevertheless, God is at work to bring about his good and loving purposes. In the cross and empty tomb, in Israel's slavery and release, in every word of truth and act of love, we see signs of God present and at work! Part of our task is to notice, to celebrate and to join in what he's already

doing!

In the story of Jesus being questioned about paying tax to Cesar, we face the daily challenge of how we are to be faithful to God in the world as it is. In a time of pandemic, in a world where some of our neighbours go hungry, in a country where the good news of King Jesus often is not heard, what does the Lord require of us? Well, Jesus says: ***Give to God what God has first given you!*** and thats far more than any politician has ever given you! And Paul says, ***Overcome evil with good.***

In that spirit, lets go and do the will of God. Amen!

## **Prayer of Thanksgiving and Prayers of Intercession**

Holy God, we thank you for the gift of freedom given to us and to this universe.

Yet, you have not forgotten us or ceased to work for our good, coming in Jesus to invite us to live as citizens of your Kingdom, women and men, young and old, sharing in your work of overcoming evil with good; ignorance with understanding, and hurt with healing.

Day by day, may we choose to live in friendship with you, committed to seeing signs of your presence and activity in the world and joining in your work of justice and peace-making, mercy and loving-kindness, healing and wholeness.

We ask our prayer in Jesus name. Amen

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Lord, we pray for your world and for all who are caught up in the evil of war and hatred; hunger and indifference; ignorance and pride; affluence and greed.

We pray for peace and justice for the people of the Yemen and for all who suffer from war, hunger and disease.

We pray for the citizens of the United States as they cast their votes and share in shaping the worlds future.

May they seek your will and do it.

Your Kingdom come **ALL: Your will be done**

We pray for the church in every part of the globe: that where it is too comfortable it may hear your challenge and where it is persecuted or under stress

it may have the courage to continue to love and to serve.

We pray for the whole Christian community in Matlock; for the church in Matlock Moor as it bears witness to Christ amongst the new housing and community that now surrounds it; for this church family, that we may care for one another in this time of pandemic and quietly grow in faith and love as we explore new ways of serving you.....

Your Kingdom come **ALL: Your will be done**

We pray for Great Britain and Northern Ireland and all who make the decisions

about our future trading relationship with the European Union  
and those who seek to guide us through our battle with Covid 19....

Your Kingdom come **ALL: Your will be done**

We pray for those who live with daily stress:

the stress of caring for very sick patients;

the stress of personal anxiety and fear;

the stress of relationships that are breaking;

the stress of unemployment or its threat;

the stress of seeking you and seeming to find you absent.

In quiet we bring to God those we would remember by name.....

..... Lord, give comfort to the afflicted,

your love to those who carry great burdens of sorrow or need;

your light to those who dwell in darkness

and healing, hope and new life to those who call out to you in their distress.

Your Kingdom come **ALL: Your will be done**

Lord, you know each of us better than we know ourselves.

By the light of Christ, help us to see the truth about lives,

what we should lay down and what we should take up;

what holds us back in our Christian life

and what may enable us to become more profitable servants.

In stillness and in activity may we listen to your voice

and grow in Christ-like love for others.

Your Kingdom come **ALL: Your will be done**

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

## Lords Prayer

**Hymn:** 706 Longing for light, we wait in darkness

1. Longing for light, we wait in darkness.

Longing for truth, we turn to you.

Make us your own, your holy people,

Light for the world to see.

*Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.*

*Shine through the darkness.*

*Christ, be our light! Shine in your Church*

*Gathered today.*

2. Longing for peace, our world is troubled.

Longing for hope, many despair.

Your word alone has power to save us

Make us your living voice.

3. Longing for food, many are hungry.

Longing for water, many still thirst.

Make us your bread, broken for others,

Shared until all are fed.

4. Longing for shelter people are homeless.

Longing for warmth, many are cold.

Make us your building, sheltering others,

Walls made of living stone.

5. Many the gifts, many the people,

Many the hearts that yearn to belong.

Let us be servants to one another,

Making your kingdom come.

*Bernadette Farrell*

## Blessing

Go into the world in peace: be of good courage:

serve the Lord: and the blessing of God,

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

be with you and all whom you love,  
this day and for evermore. Amen.