

**WELCOME** God is here in our midst today as we come to worship Him here in the church and online. The God of all majesty, purity, holiness, might and strength yet the God who came into our world in human form of Jesus who in the words of Paul to the Philippians <sup>5</sup> *had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion. (2:8)*

Our first hymn encourages us as servants of God to proclaim His wonderful name. Today the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mark of mission is tending (responding) to human need and we will be seeking to find the way in which Jesus did just that and what it is He asks of us as we proclaim His wonderful name through loving service.

**HYMN 130 Ye servants of God**

1. Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim,  
and publish abroad his wonderful name;  
the name all-victorious of Jesus extol;  
his kingdom is glorious, and rules over all.
  
  2. God ruleth on high, almighty to save;  
and still he is nigh, his presence we have;  
the great congregation his triumph shall sing,  
ascribing salvation to Jesus our king.
  
  3. 'Salvation to God who sits on the throne!'  
let all cry aloud, and honour the Son:  
the praises of Jesus the angels proclaim,  
fall down on their faces, and worship the Lamb.
  
  4. Then let us adore, and give him his right;  
all glory and power, all wisdom and might,  
all honour and blessing, with angels above,  
and thanks never-ceasing, and infinite love.
- (Amen, amen)

## **PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION**

Praise my soul the king of Heaven to His feet thy tribute ring ransomed healed restored forgiven who like me His praise should sing. Lord God in the quietness of this place we turn our thoughts to you, a God who has set the world in motion, a God who knows every intricate detail of every part of the universe because you made it. Our minds cannot comprehend Your greatness and yet You cause our hearts to swell and sing out with praise to You God, You who have shown us Your tremendous love by being willing to come to earth, to limit Yourself to a human body. You who are so large, so magnificent, so majestic allowed Yourself to be squeezed into the smallness of an egg, growing in a womb. We worship You who became flesh, the same as our flesh.

Our souls cry out in praise to You, Lord God, because by coming to earth You have allowed us to regain access to You. But that has been granted to us at great, infinite cost to Yourself. You have provided a ransom for us, Your own precious Son, You have healed the rift between us, You have provided a way for us to be restored to Your presence because You have shown us Your love, a love which forgives us. Lord God Almighty, Redeemer and Saviour we worship You.

Our hearts continue to yearn for You Lord God. We recognise that part of ourselves which is Yours and Yours alone. And yet what You want is the praise of our whole hearts, the praise of our entire minds, the worship of our whole selves. And we cannot give You that. Much of the time we would like to but there is always a part which we want to hold onto, a part which we selfishly think is ours and ours alone. Forgive us our lack of trust, forgive us our doubts and fears. Help us to bring even those to You for You are a God who is big enough to cope with all that we fling at You. As we confess our sins to You we realise with wonder and amazement that You have provided us with help to renew our lives, with someone to sustain us when we are tempted, with Your Holy Spirit who will challenge us and remind us of the promises we make to You. You have given him to us to help us in our daily lives. Lord God Almighty you have given us everything we need, You **are** everything we need. Holy, merciful and sustaining God we worship You and resolve once more to respond to Your love with a determination to be the people You want us to be. We give You our money our talents our time, ourselves. In Jesus Name we pray, saying together the prayer He taught, 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 Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom the power and the glory forever. Amen

**READING *John 13:1-15 (NIV)***

***Read by Elizabeth Davidson (E&Y)***

***Jesus washes his disciples' feet***

*13 It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.*

*2 The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' 7 Jesus replied, 'You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand.'*

*8 'No,' said Peter, 'you shall never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.' 9 'Then, Lord,' Simon Peter replied, 'not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!'*

*10 Jesus answered, 'Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.' 11 For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.*

*12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. 'Do you understand what I have done for you?' he asked them. 13 'You call me "Teacher" and "Lord", and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*

## **REFLECTION Part 1**

The first two Marks of Mission are to do with building up folk in faith through telling the Good News and teaching new believers. The last 3 are all expressions of how our faith should look in practice.

In verse 3 we read Jesus knew that the Father had given him complete power; he knew that he'd come from God and was going to God...so he rose...rose to bring all his cosmic, creating power to bear in a new way of living, obliterating almost all that had gone before? God did that once so why would he not do it again. No that wasn't to be God's way again.

Jesus rose and knelt. God in all His power knelt before the people of His creation, the squabbling, petty minded, altruistic people that had transformed from the perfectly formed folk of his creation. The power behind the stunning creation of the universe knelt and served. It is hard for our finite minds to comprehend the force of this. As Philipians says, He left the glory of heaven coming to earth as a human giving up all the glory He had.

Let's put this story into context. We only find it here in John's gospel – the others don't refer to it at all. Jesus has had his feet washed – with the expensive perfume which Mary produced. We know that it was

the custom for the host of any meal to have his servants wash the feet of his guests as they arrived. The sandy dust needed to be got off their feet – for their comfort but also to keep the house tidy too!

Jesus has already had people trying to kill him, He knows that Judas will soon be betraying Him to the authorities and He's about to tell Peter that he will betray him too by denying that he knows Jesus. It's into this mix that Jesus comes to care.

To care deeply, challengingly, comfortingly.

Jesus in his power rose, knelt and washed their feet.

When Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, He was demonstrating unconditional love. He knew what they were like, He knew what they'd do as He neared His death and yet He chose willingly to show them love through service. That's the sort of love that Jesus talks about when He says, "Love God and love your neighbour as you love yourself."

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Mark of Mission is to respond (tend) to human need in loving service. We thought about loving service a few weeks back when we read Colossians 3:12-17 – let me remind you of part of that, ***So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offence. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.***

Compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline, even temperedness, forgiveness, all components of love, unconditional love. And of course Jesus urges us to love not only the people who love us but those who we might term enemies.

At the start of a New Year it is always good to reflect on where God wants us to be, who He wants us to be with and how He wants us to act.

*Question 1 then is just that – where does God wants you to be, who does He wants you to be with and how does He wants you to act?*

*Question 2 is the same as we seek to find God's way for us as church.*

I wonder though if you've ever thought about responding to human need through loving service as meaning allowing others to care for your needs. A line from a hymn that we'll be singing shortly goes give me the grace to let you be my servant too. We are all so independent folk, never wanting to ask for help, shunning it often when we're offered it, yet Jesus modelled it by giving up everything He had in heaven, coming to earth as a helpless baby, submitting Himself to the authorities, being crucified with others in charge of His life and indeed His death.

*What might that look like in our lives? What might that look like in the life of our church? We are good at trying to find ways to help others what about being willing to be helped by others in our community?*

Ponder these over the coming week, asking God to show you answers.

God sometimes speaks in wonderfully clear spectacular ways, more often through the still small voice. He speaks through what we read and what we hear from others. We praise Him that He is passionate about communicating with us as we sing Lord you sometimes speak in wonders.

### **HYMN 606 Lord you sometimes speak in wonders**

1. Lord, you sometimes speak in wonders,  
unmistakable and clear,  
mighty signs that show your presence,  
overcoming doubt and fear.

2. Lord, you sometimes speak in whispers,  
still and small and scarcely heard;  
only those who want to listen  
catch the all-important word.

3. Lord, you sometimes speak in silence,  
through our loud and noisy day:  
we can know and trust you better  
when we quietly wait and pray.

4. Lord, you sometimes speak in Scripture,  
words that summon from the page,  
shown and taught us by your Spirit  
with fresh light for every age.

5. Lord, you always speak in Jesus,  
always new yet still the same:  
teach us now more of our Saviour,  
make our lives display his NAME.

Christopher Martin Idle (b. 1938)

Music adapted from a melody in Christian Friedrich Witt's

Psalmodia Sacra, Gotha, 1715

### **REFLECTION Part 2**

**Adapted from Eddie Askew (Cross Purposes pages 56 & 65 Leprosy Mission©1997)**

Put yourself among the disciples coming together for supper with Jesus. It's the Passover... You feel your way up the outside staircase, a hand on the rough wall. As you go inside the door creaks and little oil lamps glow giving soft light to the room.

You wash your hands in the bowl at the door, the water cool as you shake it from your fingers. As you sit down you hear noises from the city, voices into the street. There's the smell of food. Fresh baked bread, roast lamb, herbs, rough country wine.

You feel a bit uncomfortable though. It's not really a party atmosphere. You hadn't wanted to come to Jerusalem it had seemed too dangerous, but Jesus had insisted. And then there'd been the argument about who was the greatest, who would sit where. Jesus had intervened. "I'm here as your servant," he said. That was strange. It made you think.

What does Jesus see when he looks round the room? They are all people he loves, faults and all. Peter – hot headed. Thomas - a bit cautious, Judas... and you. What does Jesus see in you? Then he moves. You hear water pouring. He takes a towel and a bowl and starts to wash the disciples' feet, John's Andrew's. Now you realise that he's coming to you. Think about Jesus kneeling down in front of you, taking your foot. How does that make you feel? And as your eyes meet what do you want to say to him?

Your action leaves me questioning, teaches me more than I am ready to accept. It's not that I protest, like Peter and refuse to let you wash my feet. That's not the point. I'd let you do that willingly and given half a chance I'd just as willingly wash yours. A privilege I'd jump at. The bit that makes me hesitate, rubs the raw edges of my pride and leaves me sore is that you're telling me to do the same. I can accept the thought of kneeling to the ones I love and those who love me back. But I'm not so sure about the others. To go to those I find unsympathetic, incompatible; the ones I'd never think of bringing home to dinner and offering the same consideration. Lord that's tough but if you found it in your heart to welcome Judas I've no excuse...

And then I hear you say **Matthew 25**<sup>34</sup> *'Come, you that are blessed by my Father! Come and possess the kingdom which has been prepared for you ever since the creation of the world.* <sup>35</sup> *I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes,* <sup>36</sup> *naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me.'* <sup>37</sup> *The righteous will then answer him, 'When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink?'* <sup>38</sup> *When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you in our homes, or naked and clothe you?'* <sup>39</sup> *When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?'* <sup>40</sup> *The King will reply, 'I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me!'*

Living, loving Lord show me the people you want me to care for. Show us as a church the people we need respond to in loving service. Amen

**HYMN 694**            **Brother, sister let me serve you**

**BROTHER SISTER LET ME SERVE YOU**

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

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

I will hold the Christ-light for you

In the night-time of your fear

I will hold my hand out to you

Speak the peace you long to hear

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

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

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.

Richard A.M. Gillard (b.1953)

arranged Betty Jane Pulkingham (b.1928)

## PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Elma Hendrie (Selkirk)

Today we use a prayer created by the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland in this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Let us pray

With faith and confidence, we come in prayer, before God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

The Magi came from the East to pay homage and offer special gifts from their cultures and countries. We pray today for all Christian communities around the world in their diversity of worship and tradition: Lord we ask you to preserve these treasures, particularly in areas of the world where the presence and survival of the Church is threatened by violence and oppression.

### **Response: O, Lord, hear our prayer**

The early years of the Lord's life were marked by violence and massacres at the orders of the despot Herod.

We pray for children living in places in the world where violence continues and where its results are tangible. Strengthen, O Lord, the bonds of unity and mutual love among our churches and help us to cooperate and witness to your holy Name. Inspire us to work without ceasing in order to defend the oppressed and include the marginalized. Encourage us to stand together in the face of tyranny and oppressive regimes as we seek your Kingdom among us.

### **Response: O, Lord, hear our prayer**

After the visit of the Magi, the holy family experienced migration through the wilderness and became refugees in the land of Egypt.

We pray for all the refugees and uprooted people in this world:

Equip us, Lord, to show hospitality to those driven from their homes, and grant us the spirit of welcome to those looking for a safe haven.

### **Response: O, Lord, hear our prayer**

The birth of Jesus was good news for all, gathering people from different nations and religions in worship of the holy child. We pray for our efforts to seek harmony and dialogue with other religions:

Lord, give us humility and patience to walk with others with respect on their journey.

### **Response: O, Lord, hear our prayer**

The Magi returned to their home by a different way. We pray for our churches in this changing world: Lord, help us to find new and creative ways to follow you and to witness to you so that the world may believe.

### **Response: O, Lord, hear our prayer**

When the Magi saw the holy child, they rejoiced with great joy.

Heavenly Father, fix our eyes on him so we do not lose our way.

Unite us in the Lord Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life, in whose name we pray Amen.

**HYMN 374 From heaven you came**

From Heaven you came helpless babe  
Entered our world Your glory veiled  
Not to be served but to serve  
And give your life that we might live

*This is our God the servant king  
He calls us now to follow Him  
To bring our lives as a daily offering  
Of worship to the servant King*

There in the garden of tears  
My heavy load He chose to bear  
His heart with sorrow was torn  
'Yet not my will but yours' he said.

*This is our God...*

Come see His hands and His feet  
The scars that speak of sacrifice  
Hands that flung stars into space  
To cruel nails surrendered

*This is our God ...*

So let us learn how to serve  
And in our lives enthrone Him  
Each other's needs to prefer  
For it is Christ we're serving

*This is our God...*

Graham KEndrick (b.1950)

**BENEDICTION**

**The strength of God be your support, the light of God be your guide, the love of God be your joy.  
Go knowing the blessing of the Presence of Almighty God; Father, Son and Spirit working in and  
through your life today and everyday. Amen**