

Salford Methodist Circuit



Wow Moments - 14th February 2021

Ruth Dawson

Hello and welcome to you all, if you are joining for the first time, if you are returning, if you have joined us each week, all are welcome.

Our Call to worship this week -

People of God, raise your expectations of what it means to encounter God in this place.

Be open to God revealing something of his divine nature to us, and changing the way we see the world.

We sing our first hymn as we prepare to meet with God,

Hymn: Jesus Calls Us Here To Meet Him

*Jesus calls us here to meet him
as, through word and song and prayer,
we affirm God's promised presence
where his people live and care.
Praise the God who keeps his promise;
praise the Son who calls us friends;
praise the Spirit who, among us,
to our hopes and fears attends.*

*Jesus calls us to confess him
Word of life and Lord of all,
sharer of our flesh and frailness,
saving all who fail or fall.
Tell his holy human story;
tell his tales that all may hear;
tell the world that Christ in glory
came to earth to meet us here.*

*Jesus calls us to each other,
vastly different though we are;
creed and colour, class and gender
neither limit nor debar.
Join the hand of friend and stranger;
join the hands of age and youth;
join the faithful and the doubter
in their common search for truth.*

Today is special for some, for those in loving relationships or those wishing to be, for those with their eye on someone special... yep today is Valentine's Day. Some trace Valentine's Day origins to a Christian effort to replace a pagan fertility festival that has been dated as far back as the 6th century B.C. During

Salford Methodist Circuit



the festival of Lupercalia, Roman priests would sacrifice goats and dogs and use their blood-soaked hides to slap women on the streets, as a fertility blessing. According to legend, women would later put their names in an urn and be selected to be paired with a man for a year.

History's first valentine was written in perhaps one of the most unromantic places conceivable: a prison. Charles, Duke of Orleans wrote the love letter to his second wife at the age of 21 while captured at the Battle of Agincourt. As a prisoner for more than 20 years, he would never see his valentine's reaction to the poem he penned to her in the early 15th century

People started exchanging cards and handwritten letters to both lovers and friends during the 17th century, but it was in the 1840s that the first Valentine's Day cards were mass-produced in the U.S., sold by Esther A. Howland. Known as the "Mother of the American Valentine," Esther is credited with commercializing Valentine's Day cards in America, and she is remembered for her elaborate, crafty cards made with lace and ribbons.

But what of the love affair we have we God? Do we wait for a special day each year to show our love to God? Do we spend time and effort to share our love of God to those around us? Instead of cards, flowers or chocolates do we spend time walking with God, taking our thoughts, our worries and joys, do we listen to the moments when God sits quietly alongside and motivates us to keep going, do we prayerfully praise God for the powerful presence in our lives, do we shower with love, respect, trust? Perhaps today is the day to remind ourselves of the True unwavering love God has for each of us, for all of us whomever we love.

Let's come to God again in song as we sing Father, we love you, we worship and adore you

Hymn: Father We Love You

*Father, we love you,
we worship and adore you:
glorify your name
in all the earth.
Glorify your name,
glorify your name,
glorify your name,
in all the earth.*

*Jesus, we love you,
we worship and adore you:
glorify your name
in all the earth.
Glorify your name,*

Salford Methodist Circuit



*glorify your name,
glorify your name,
in all the earth.*

*Spirit, we love you,
we worship and adore you:
glorify your name
in all the earth.
Glorify your name,
glorify your name,
glorify your name,
in all the earth.*

In this quiet moment, sit comfortably, close your eyes, and in the peace imagine God entering the place where you are, in person, coming into your space, sitting beside you, being just with you...

Take this moment just to be with God, to speak to God, to listen to God, just to be ...

Bible Reading: Psalm 50: 1-6

*The Mighty One, God, the Lord,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to where it sets.
From Zion, perfect in beauty,
God shines forth.
Our God comes
and will not be silent;
a fire devours before him,
and around him a tempest rages.
He summons the heavens above,
and the earth, that he may judge his people:
"Gather to me this consecrated people,
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice."
And the heavens proclaim his righteousness,
for he is a God of justice.*

Bible Readings; Mark 9: 2-9

After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

Salford Methodist Circuit



Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

*Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"
Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.*

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Bible Reading: 2 Corinthians 4: 3-6

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

Hymn: There's A Light Upon The Mountain

*There's a light upon the mountains, and the day is at the spring,
when our eyes shall see the beauty and the glory of the King;
weary was our heart with waiting, and the night-watch seemed so long;
but his triumph-day is breaking, and we hail it with a song.*

*There's a hush of expectation, and a quiet in the air;
and the breath of God is moving in the fervent breath of prayer:
for the suffering, dying Jesus is the Christ upon the throne,
and the travail of our spirit is the travail of his own.*

*He is breaking down the barriers, he is casting up the way;
he is calling for his angels to build up the gates of day:
but his angels here are human, not the shining hosts above;
for the drum-beats of his army are the heart-beats of our love.*

*Hark! We hear a distant music, and it comes with fuller swell;
'tis the triumph-song of Jesus, of our King, Immanuel:
Zion, go now forth to meet him; and, my soul, be swift to bring
all your finest and your noblest for the triumph of our King!*

Salford Methodist Circuit



Did you get a wow moment today? Lovely flowers? Big box of chocolates? Unexpected card?

Or can you think of the biggest wow moment you've ever had? Perhaps you've been lucky enough to see the Northern Lights (on my bucket list!), or undertaken a challenge you never thought you would complete, and that feeling at the end...Perhaps you've watch some amazing sporting feat or eaten the most amazing food...

In our readings today we have heard of encountering God:

In our gospel reading we hear how the 'favourite disciples' had their wow moment encountered God on a mountain high.

Setting this story up on the mountain, alerts us to something spectacular about to happen. God meets both Elijah (1 Kings 19:8) and Moses (Exodus 19:3) on the mountain-top. Just before the passage we have heard, Jesus has turned the disciples' worlds upside down. Peter had found the words to articulate who Jesus is 'You are the Messiah' Jesus accepts this but then tells them of his forthcoming suffering and death. He fiercely rebukes Peter's incredulity, but the disciples must have found it impossible to grasp this unimaginable future. There is tragedy ahead, but here in this passage the glory of Jesus' true being is revealed to the three favourite disciples.

The story we hear is told from the perspectives of the disciples. They see Jesus changed in ways they can only describe by saying that his clothes became brilliant white. They see two of the greatest figures from history of Israel speaking to Jesus as equals. They were terrified. Peter stammers out words that reveal his yearning for this moment to go on for ever. He must have regretted the words as soon as they have left his mouth - yet what words could be adequate for this experience? Peter's stumbling words are eclipsed by the voice of God. The cloud coming down the mountain is a Jewish tradition which links the cloud with the glory of God, and from this cloud God speaks. God's word at the baptism of Jesus, were spoken to Jesus. This time God speaks directly to the disciples. God's voice gives the disciples the words to make sense of what they have seen - this has happened because Jesus really is the Son of God - they are reassured that they should listen to him.

Finally, as they return to the foot of the mountain, Jesus tells them to tell no one, continuing Mark's theme of secrecy until the full revelation of Jesus' identity at the crucifixion.

Wow!

Could you imagine... could you?

What on earth.... Or perhaps that's the point!

Salford Methodist Circuit



What must the disciples felt, how could they have made sense of seeing Moses, and Elijah and Jesus talking to each other as if they were friends on equal footing? How on earth could you then keep his secret?

Peter's response to the presence of Moses and Elijah shows how much he longs to hold on to this special moment. He wants to build a place where they can stay, and keep this moment going. This was never going to happen; this was a moment of fleeting brilliance. Yet many people yearn to embody their faith in bricks and mortar, expressing passion in concrete wonder. Locking in these moments, rather than celebrate and share.

We have spent almost a year now, with little access to the inside of our church buildings. Has this affected your interactions with God?

When contemplating this service, I wandered through my Wow moments, the birth of my children, each amazing in their own rights, the moments they have blown me away, the boys both being selected for World Scouting Jamborees, moments when their sensitivity and helping of others have given me glimpses of the human beings they are and will be, the wow moments at work when people have overcome the odds and walked from their hospital beds, when others have waited days for that long distant relative before saying their final goodbyes. The moments when I have heard the whisper in my ear, or seen God at work in those around me, going to great lengths to protect the homeless, feed the poor or gently coax the desperate from the wrong side of the bridge

I have been working with an amazing team giving vaccines in our own vaccine centre in Liverpool. I cannot describe to you the multitude of wow moments - the lady who clapped and bounced out of the cubicle, looked me full in the face and exclaimed You Have Just Saved My Life!, the older chap who when I said it's nearly your birthday, his eyes welled with tears, and he said - and you have just given me the best birthday present of my life. I could go on, the 9and half thousand people who have come through our centre, each with their own tale.

And then a new Wow moment, listening to the hymn Speak O Lord in my car (yep always the car!) turned up full, after a very busy day, doing the day job, followed by a shift in the vaccine centre, the final verse always speaks, but this evening in the dark, on a lightless motorway with snow in the air, the words wrapped their arms around me, warmed me to the very core and spoke softly in my ear:

'And by Grace we'll stand on your promises and by faith we'll walk as you walk with us'

By faith we'll walk as you walk with us...

Salford Methodist Circuit



It is really is that simple, we walk side by side each and every day, God is there always, we just need to take the time to listen, to speak, to act to notice the Wow!

Let's turn to the Lord in prayer

O God you have always been with us
Thank you for the times when we have felt close to you
Thank you for guiding our steps
Thankyou being close even when we did not know it
Thank you for people and places that have helped us to draw close to you
Thank you for each facet of your character that we have glimpsed.
Amen

Life before you Jesus was empty and void. But Wow! What a difference your presence makes! We are so grateful for the day we turned into the 'good news'. What a wonder it is hat the light seen by the disciples on the mountain can b seen shinning in us today.

Thank you, lord, for your transforming power.
Amen

Lord's Prayer

Let's sing that hymn, that spoke to me so recently StF 161 Speak O Lord

Hymn: Speak O Lord, As We Come To You

*Speak, O Lord, as we come to you
to receive the food of your holy word.
Take your truth, plant it deep in us;
shape and fashion us in your likeness,
that the light of Christ might be seen today
in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us
all your purposes, for your glory.*

*Teach us, Lord, full obedience,
holy reverence, true humility.
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
in the radiance of your purity.
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
your majestic love and authority.
Words of power that can never fail;
let their truth prevail over unbelief.*

Salford Methodist Circuit



*Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
help us grasp the heights of your plans for us.
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
that will echo down through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on your promises,
and by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, till your Church is built
and the earth is filled with your glory.*

As you reflect on your time with God this morning, think about those Wow moments you have already had, perhaps speak to those around you if you can or to those you might meet via zoom this week, about those wow moments, have you kept them secret, how do you share, consider as you go through your week, how you cultivate those wow moments, and how in future you might share.

Lord Jesus, raise our expectations of what it means to encounter God not just in this place but in every place, in all the places we shall be in the days ahead.

Help us every day to discover something new about God's ways,
about what God wants of us - and change the way we see the world,
and the way we act.

Amen

CCL: 30925

Jesus Calls Us Here To Meet Him - John L. Bell & Graham Maule

Words: From Love From Below ©1989. WGRG, Iona Community, Glasgow G2 3DH Scotland.
www.wrg.co.uk

Father, We Love You - Donna Adkins Words and Music: © 1976 CCCMMusic / Maranatha! Music,
Administered by Song Solutions CopyCare, 14 Horsted Square. Uckfield, East Sussex, TN22 1QG.
www.songsolutions.org

There's A Light Upon The Mountains - Henry Burton

Speak O Lord - Keith Getty & Stuart Townend Words and Music: © 2005, Thankyou Music.
Administered by worshiptogether.com Songs. excluding UK & Europe. administered by
Kingswaysongs. a division of David C Cook tym@kingsway.co.uk