

Salford Methodist Circuit



Living Hope - 25th April 2021
Ruth Dawson

Hello and welcome to our worship on whatever day you may have joined us.

Our call to worship today:

A love that never ceases,
A creativity that designed the universe,
A hope that cannot be quenched,
A pursuit of reconciliation no matter to the cost:
These are the things that are of God,
Then let us worship God.

Let's sing our first hymn this morning, and bring a quiet peacefulness to this day
– There's a quiet understanding when we're gathered in the Spirit, it's a promise
that He gives us, when we gather in His name.

Hymn: There's A Quiet Understanding

*There's a quiet understanding
when we're gathered in the Spirit,
it's a promise that he gives us,
when we gather in his name.
There's a love we feel in Jesus,
there's a manna that he feeds us,
it's a promise that he gives us,
when we gather in his name.*

*And we know when we're together,
sharing love and understanding,
that our brothers and our sisters
feel the oneness that he brings.
Thank you, thank you, thank you, Jesus,
for the way you love and feed us,
for the many ways you lead us;
thank you, thank you, Lord;
thank you, thank you, Lord.*

Those amazing words of what we have just sung tell of a promise, a hope that
when we gather in the Spirit, when we share the love of God together, there's a
gentle hope of what is to be or to come.

Let's pray together:

Loving Lord hear our prayers here today.

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We give thanks that even after the past year of turmoil, through the months of not knowing, and the ever-enduring speculations of what might be, the one true constant has been your Love, shining as a beacon to our hope of better days to come.

We give thanks to you that as restrictions are lifted, slowly, we may meet with family and friends we have waited so long to catch up with, that we may start to enjoy the things we have been unable to for so long, that we may see the small glimmerings of what might be.

We give thanks that vaccines are available to many, that anti-viral drugs are in development and treatments for this deadly virus are beginning to take hold, lessening the fear of what the future might hold.

We in turn Lord, ask for forgiveness when we have doubted that things would ever return to a sense of the normal, when we have feared that medical science may not be what it needed to be, when we have gossiped about how much we would have run the fight against Coronavirus differently given the chance, when we have not put our true faith in you.

Bring us together today Lord, to a sense of true hope, open our eyes to see the light shine, our ears to hear the whisperings of your word and our mouths to speak of the one true everlasting hope who is Jesus Christ.

In your name, Amen.

Lord's Prayer

*Our Father in Heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen.*

Let's sing together again. A song of hope, in knowing that God knows us, even beyond our own understanding, where even our darkness becomes light before God, safe in His hands, is the hope we crave...

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Hymn: O God, You Search Me And You Know Me.

*O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
When I walk or lie down you are before me:
ever the maker and keeper of my days.*

*You know my resting and my rising.
You discern my purpose from afar,
and with love everlasting you besiege me:
in every moment of life or death, you are.
The Wholeness of Creation*

*Before a word is on my tongue, Lord,
you have known its meaning through and through.
You are with me beyond my understanding:
God of my present, my past and future, too.*

*Although your Spirit is upon me,
still I search for shelter from your light.
There is nowhere on earth I can escape you:
even the darkness is radiant in your sight.*

*For you created me and shaped me,
gave me life within my mother's womb.
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you:
safe in your hands, all creation is made new*

Bible Reading: Mark 4 : 30 - 34

Again, he said, 'What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.'

With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

Bible Reading: 1 Peter 1 : 3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

Amen



Can you hear it?
Can you?
Come on lean in ... listen...
Can you hear it really...
the slightest whisper of hope!

After the last year or so I think we deserve some hope, don't you?
I've been very conscious of it over the last couple of weeks. Hearing people talk of 'the light at the end of the tunnel', venues opening for the first time in months, people overjoyed by being able to go to the hairdressers, my daughter's early morning WhatsApp gasping in delight that she had finally been swimming!

Following over thirteen months of on and off lockdowns, counting success and failure by the deaths of those around us, fighting despair, not being able to see those we love in the ways we would normally, I suppose we deserve a little hope.

But what of hope? What do we mean when we crave hope?

Hope is defined by the all-knowing Wikipedia as 'an optimistic state of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at large, expect with confidence, to cherish a desire with anticipation...'

Christian hope is that of eternal life founded on faith the Jesus Christ was resurrected from death. As Christians, living in hope is seeking to live on God's promises, where that hope is revealed and confirmed in the resurrection of Jesus.

However, this hope is not just for the next life, but the lives we are living now. Our reading from 1 Peter tells of how the resurrection causes us to be born again into a living hope.

A living hope.

So what of this living hope? How do we as individuals, as groups, as churches live in hope? The world is often a difficult place to be. The news regales tales and tales of woe, of tragedy, of death, of how disgraceful we behave to each other. Even here though there are sprinkles of hope. Little glimmers of how things can be.

Our reading from Mark, describes how Jesus spoke to the people in parables, explaining the Word to those around him who would listen in stories. Stories of the day they could relate to and make sense of what Jesus told them. We too do the same, we tell our children stories and nursery rhymes to help them learn, we use our own stories to tell others of our wants and needs, our hopes and our

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fears, we use stories in sermons, to bring the word of God to those around us today, in the ways that make sense to us today.

The parable of the mustard seed, has always given me wonder and hope. The miracle of the smallest of seeds giving life to the greatest of trees, a tree that will provide in many ways for those around it. We used to sing a song to our children which I also loved, 'who put the colours in the rainbow'. I loved and still do the line – 'who put the tree inside the acorn? It surely can't be chance?'

It surely isn't and wasn't by chance.

Sometimes, when even getting out of bed is difficult, when the days of isolation or shielding have stretched before us, the fear that we will always be wearing masks, we look to the stories of others to bring us hope, to remind us of a living hope.

We now have a several working vaccines, which are proving very successful in the fight against corona, anti-viral drugs are now being developed to treat those who may contract the virus, and we can track the mutations, and further develop treatments.

We have develop new ways of being, even here, right now, is an example of worship we perhaps never in our wildest dreams thought that we at Salford Circuit, and many others would be utilising in 2021. Many of us have developed new skills in this virtual space. We have share the greatest story ever told across the airwaves. Holy week reflections developed for the Circuit gave us an opportunity to reflect on the story of the resurrection, and what this means personally to us, we were able to meet in different ways to share our thoughts, reflections, our fears and our hopes. We enjoyed a fabulous coming together of many of the preachers in this Circuit on Easter Sunday, celebrating the hope of the risen Lord!

However the next few weeks, and months pan out before us, with the slow emergence of life around us, more people able to interact more with each other, there's a hope that not only can we return to what we once knew, but an even greater hope that we have a better understanding of each other, that we can live in peace and harmony alongside each other, that we can take the lessons we have learnt and develop a future that is inclusive of all, where colour of skin, faith, gender, sexual orientation, age is not a barrier to the lives we lead.

And we remember hope is not a general hope, a distant wish for things to be better. We, as followers of Christ, remember hope, that there is a true and everlasting hope, in Jesus Christ.

I cannot sum up hope better than the word by T. B. LaBerge:

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Hope is not an idea, a movement or a fluttering song bird.

Hope is not a dream or a wish, a plea or a thought.

Hope is a man who died on a cross, who took on the world so that it might be saved.

Hope is a God who became a carpenter, a King who wore a crown of thorns.

Hope came to the world and called it beautiful, lovely and altogether worthy of redemption.

Hope is Christ, and He is calling all to Him, giving out Himself so that we may know what hope is.

Amen.

Let's us bring before God our prayers for others...

Dear Lord our God,

We are thankful that you are constantly at work in our lives.

You are a help in times of difficulty, a strength in times of weakness, a guide when we're lost and alone.

We know that through Your Son, Jesus Christ, You have the power...

to transform lives, to mend broken relationships, to bring strength to the weary and hope to the broken hearted.

We pray for those who are estranged from spouse or family, friends or neighbours; who find it difficult to forgive past wrongs done to them;

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who for years have carried feelings of guilt or regret for something they did or something they neglected to do; who find it difficult to ask for forgiveness or to forgive themselves;

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those who find themselves far away from You, struggling to overcome their doubts or disillusionment, and who wonder how to find their way back;

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those watching someone they love try to cope with serious illness or injury, and who long for Your miraculous intervention;

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For the many others in our world who are suffering this day — from grief, or loneliness,

hunger, poverty, violence or illness;

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Sustain all those who look to You in hope. And strengthen us — Your people — so that we may be a light to all those who find themselves in darkness.

In the name of Jesus Christ, the light of the world.

Amen



We sing our final hymn, a hymn a great hope. When we wrestle with our doubts,
fear in our failures, and descend in the darkness
Just like the lighthouse that beams hope and safety across the dark, murky
waters, God's love brings us all to hope and safety...

Hymn: My Lighthouse

*In my wrestling and in my doubts
In my failures You won't walk out
Your great love will lead me through
You are the peace in my troubled sea
You are the peace in my troubled sea*

*In the silence, You won't let go
In the questions, Your truth will hold
Your great love will lead me through
You are the peace in my troubled sea
You are the peace in my troubled sea*

*My lighthouse, my lighthouse
Shining in the darkness. I will follow You
My lighthouse, my lighthouse
I will trust the promise
You will carry me safe to shore (oh-oh-oh-oh-oh)
Safe to shore (oh-oh-oh-oh-oh)
Safe to shore (oh-oh-oh-oh-oh)
Safe to shore*

*I won't fear what tomorrow brings
With each morning I'll rise and sing
My God's love will lead me through
You are the peace in my troubled sea
You are the peace in my troubled sea
My lighthouse, my lighthouse...*

*Fire before us, You're the brightest
You will lead us through the storms
(x4)*

My lighthouse, my lighthouse...

As you go forward into a new week, with fresh beginnings and new hope,
Go from here with confidence and hope.

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Strengthen those who are tired and exhausted; comfort those who are anxious and fearful.

Say to them all: "Be strong, and do not fear! For God is coming— Indeed, God is already here!"

Amen

CCL: 30925

There's a Quiet Understanding - Tedd Smith

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Performed by Chapter and Verse

O God, You Search Me And You Know Me - Bernadette Farrell

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My Lighthouse - Rend Collective

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