

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 1st 2020

Lead by Linda Leathersich, Local Preacher

Today is All Saints Day, a day often set aside for us to share our memories of those people we have known, loved and lost – people who have influenced our own lives and given us a good example to follow. Let's pause for a moment to Thank God that they were a part of our lives. We remember especially those who are still grieving for loved ones who have died during Lock down and pray that they will receive God's loving touch and comfort.

Our opening words were written by Iris Hesselden

**Peace and faith and love and hope
Four candles burning low
Yet side by side they lit the night
And gave a warming glow
But anger soon diminished peace
As faith gave in to doubt
And love, abandoned, faded too
And soon all three went out.
But hope still kept her flame alight
A joy for all to see
And growing stronger through the dark
She soon relit all three!
When peace and faith and love grow dim
And struggle to survive
Hold fast to hope through doubt and fear
And keep the flame alive.**

We meet to worship our God who loves us always and gave us Jesus to be our Light, Peace and Hope.

HYMN: STF 481 – The Lord's my Shepherd

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-elQQayhpak>

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me lie in pastures green,
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.

And I will trust in you alone.

And I will trust in you alone

For your endless mercy follows me,

Your goodness will lead me home

He guides my ways in righteousness,
And He anoints my head with oil;
And my cup – it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.

And I will trust in you alone.

And I will trust in you alone

For your endless mercy follows me,

Your goodness will lead me home

And though I walk the darkest path –
I will not fear the evil one,
For you are with me, and your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.

Chorus

(Stuart Townend)

Prayers

Loving God, thank you that we can place ourselves in your care, knowing that the same hands that fashioned the universe and brought the world into being will encircle us each day – powerful beyond measure yet gentle beyond words.

Thank you that when we need support, you are there, a shoulder to lean on in time of trouble, a constant source of strength.

Merciful God, forgive us, for in all kinds of ways we dwell too much on ourselves, *our* ideas, *our* image, *our* interests. Save us from a life so full of *us* that we lose sight of you and others. Instead of fretting over who and what we are, may our concern be to reflect you and you alone.

Jesus said that God is always with us, when we are happy and when we are sad. This is God's promise to us – we are forgiven.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

Readings: 1 Thessalonians 2 v9-13
 Matthew 23 v 1-12

MESSAGE:

At the beginning of the service, we thought of people who had been an example to us. What attracts you to people? What makes a good role model, someone that it is good to follow and emulate?

Why do you think people followed Jesus? Was it the things he said or the things he did? Think about that for a moment....

I think it was a combination of both, because one without the other has no substance – what Jesus said, he carried out and what he did made sense because of what he said – words and actions in harmony.

In our Gospel reading today, Jesus is drawing attention to the fact that the scribes and Pharisees were not “practicing what they were preaching”. They taught the law – and Jesus said that the Law was good and should be obeyed – BUT they multiplied the specific demands of the Law so that they became a huge burden on the people and they offered no help to the struggling people.

They also made a great display of their leadership, they wanted to be noticed, to have their authority recognised and they wanted to be treated as special wherever they were. They wanted a title that set them apart and made them more important than the people. Teaching the Law was good, adding to the burden of the people and puffing themselves up was not good. Jesus reminded everyone that those who sought greatness would be made humble and he warned people that they should not look at the example of the scribes and Pharisees who did not carry out their teaching in their own lives. They were examples of **“Don’t do as I do, do as I say!”** Jesus said that our words and our actions should match, just as his did.

In the Epistle, Paul is reminding us that the disciples went about God’s work and their mission in the right way, they didn’t expect to be treated in a special way – they worked to earn their keep and they didn’t put forward their own importance but the importance of God’s word.

What about us? There is a saying “Don’t worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you!” Children learn a great deal from watching the adults around them and following the example that is set. In the same way, people watch us – we say we are Christians, do our lives show that we are? Do our words and actions match, if they don’t, we are not likely to attract others to find out more about our God who loves us all. On my wall at work I had a poster that said **“If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?”**

Makes you think doesn’t it? We are all being watched, we are all living sermons, we all show an example to others and we need to make sure that we are being good examples in all we say and do. Our role model, the one we try to emulate has to be well chosen and the only one that will not lead us astray is Jesus. Let’s make sure it is him alone that we look to and listen to.

Let us pray:

Loving Lord Jesus,
thank you being our friend;
When we are weak, you strengthen us
When we are lonely, you speak to us
When we are sad, you comfort us
When we are glad, you rejoice with us;
You are our guide, our keeper, our example,
our shepherd and our shield
Your presence is our constant joy
Our prayers are in your name. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Knowing our dependence on God, we turn in prayer to him now...

Loving Lord, thank you for those who have walked in the way of Jesus Christ, leaving footsteps for us to follow. Whatever obstacles we may face, teach us to stay true to the path in turn, so that in some small way we may inspire others as they journey in faith.

We pray that through these challenging times, your church on earth will flourish and grow and will never lose sight of our Heavenly Father.

Gracious God, reach out to our broken world – scarred by hatred, fractured by division, ravaged by war – and in your mercy, grant us peace.

Compassionate God, hear our prayer for the sick – all who are in pain, waiting for or recovering from surgery, undergoing treatment or coming to terms with terminal illness. Give help and strength to any whose health is failing, and to all who tend them. At this time we pray for our world affected by covid 19 – we pray for all those working to conquer it; for those suffering right now; for those who have lost employment and are anxious about the future; for those who work on the frontline to keep us safe.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer

Loving Lord, remembering the Hope we have in you, help us to spread a little happiness, contagious joy bubbling up within us. Teach us to live with a smile in our hearts and laughter on our lips, each day celebrating your love in a way that invites others to share it in turn.

Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer

Let's bring all our prayers together, even those only whispered in our hearts to our loving God as we share in the words that Jesus taught us...

The Lord's Prayer.

STF 662 – Have you heard God's voice?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1Aigbqg9eU>

Have you heard God's voice;
has your heart been stirred?
Are you still prepared to follow?
Have you made a choice to remain and serve,
Though the way be rough and narrow?

*Will you walk the path that will cost you much
And embrace the pain and sorrow?*

*Will you trust in One who entrusts to you
The disciples of tomorrow?*

Will you use your voice; will you not sit down
When the multitudes are silent?
Will you make a choice to stand your ground
When the crowds are turning violent?

In your city streets will you be God's heart?
Will you listen to the voiceless?
Will you stop and eat, and when friendships start
Will you share your faith with the faithless?

Will you watch the news with the eyes of faith
And believe it could be different?
Will you share your views using words of grace?
Will you leave a thoughtful imprint?

(Jacqueline G. Jones)

THE BLESSING

God grant to the living, grace:
to the departed, rest; to the world, peace
and to us and all the faithful, life everlasting. Amen.

Service and message by Linda Leathersich, Local Preacher