**Service of Worship – Sunday 27th June 2021 led by David Watson**

Welcome to our morning service at Bamford Chapel and Norden United Reformed Church, Rochdale. Our church is part of the Rochdale, Bury and North Manchester churches Missional Partnership. We are meeting again in church but continue to do a visual recording which goes out on Youtube.

My name is David Watson and I am a serving elder of the United Reformed Church.

**Call to Worship**

Living God, we come in response to your call, to offer our worship, our thanks, our confession, our lives. Accept now the worship we offer and use us for your kingdom. In Jesus’ name.

To enable our Junior Church to leave and go outside for their activities we will start with a story followed by a hymn and then prayers which will include a prayer for the young people before they leave us.

**Children’s Address**

There was a little boy named Scott and he had a pet rabbit. When his Mum and Dad bought it for him they also bought a book on how to care for it. He said that he loved his rabbit very much but really he only wanted to play with it. He did not read the book and what’s more, he didn’t want to clean out its hutch or give it new straw to lie on and he didn’t even want to feed it. He preferred to leave all that to his Mum and Dad. Very occasionally he would pull up some dandelion leaves and give them to Cottonwool, he called his rabbit that because he thought that its tail looked rather like a ball of cotton wool, but he wasn’t really bothered if it ate the dandelions or not because if it didn’t then Mum or Dad would give it some proper food later.

One day when he was playing with Cottonwool he plucked some dandelion leaves and gave them to it and the rabbit ate them, so he plucked some more and the rabbit ate them too. In fact the rabbit just ate and ate and Scott thought that that was great fun.

When he had finished playing with the rabbit, Scott put it back in the hutch as he usually did, he went in for his tea as he usually did and forgot about the rabbit as he usually did.

The next morning he heard his Dad shout for his Mum in rather an urgent voice but he didn’t take much notice, it couldn’t have anything to do with him after all. He heard his Dad start talking on the telephone and shortly after he heard him drive off in his car. Now that was unusual because it was a little too early for his Dad to leave for work and anyway it was Saturday and his Dad did not work on Saturdays.

Scott got up at his usual time and was having his breakfast when the telephone rang. Mum answered the phone and talked for a short time before coming in to the kitchen where Scott was, her face was grave as she told Scott that his rabbit was quite ill, that Dad was at the vet’s with Cottonwool and the vet had told him that it looked like it had been poisoned and that if he did not find out quickly what Cottonwool had eaten then it would die. Scott told his Mum that it couldn’t have been poison because the only thing it had eaten was lots and lots of dandelion leaves.

He was surprised when his Mum dashed out of the room and began speaking on the telephone. He was even more surprised when she came back into the kitchen and told Scott what a silly little boy he had been to give the rabbit all those dandelion leaves. She told him that if he had read the book on caring for rabbits that he would have known that having too many dandelion leaves could poison his pet.

He went back upstairs and prayed that God would let his rabbit get better and that, if He did, he would care for his rabbit properly. In fact he began straight away by reading the book on caring for the rabbit from cover to cover.

God did help Cottonwool to recover, with the help of the vet of course. Scott had suddenly found that his rabbit was so much more than a toy, which is what he had been using it as, and it became a pet, to be loved and cared for. Even though it meant giving some of his time to the rabbit instead of taking it for granted that someone else would do the less nice things like cleaning it out and giving it proper food and water each day, as it needed it.

Our parents give us the love and care we need each day. Wouldn’t it be sad if they left it to others to feed us, keep our clothes clean and love us?

We pray to God as our Father. Isn’t it wonderful that we can call the creator of the World, Father and know that he loves us and cares for us? God has given us lots of things to care for and care about, so we should always do our best and try our hardest at whatever we do because of his great love for each of us.

Now let us sing our first song if we are at home or listen to the music and read the words if we are in church;

**Hymn 445 CMP Lord the light of your Love is shining**

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| 1.. Lord, the light of your love is shining,  in the midst of the darkness, shining:  Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us;  set us free by the truth You now bring us -  shine on me, shine on me. | 2.. Lord, I come to Your awesome presence,  from the shadows into Your radiance;  by Your blood I may enter Your brightness:  search me, try me, consume all my darkness -  shine on me, shine on me. |
| 3.. As we gaze on Your kingly brightness  so our faces display Your likeness,  ever changing from glory to glory:  mirrored here may our lives tell Your story -  shine on me, shine on me. | Chorus: *Shine, Jesus, shine,*  *fill this land with the Father's glory;*  *blaze, Spirit blaze,*  *set our hearts on fire.*  *Flow, river, flow*  *flood the nations with grace and mercy;*  *send forth Your word, Lord, and let there be light!* |
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We will now share our prayers before the young people leave.

**PRAYERS**

Who is like you, wonderful God?

Who else could have created a world of such richness and diversity?

Who else has such intelligence, skill and ingenuity?

Who else could lay foundations for us to develop and control?

Who else has loved us so much and given us such freedom?

Who is like you, wonderful God?

We can only stand and gaze in wonderment and awe at such creativeness and we praise you and glorify you for it.

As we look and see and hear and find, may our hearts be filled more and more with a sense of your dynamic and creating presence.

Wonderful God, who is like you?

Amen

Lord, you have not given me a heart of stone but a living, beating heart that needs to love and be loved.

Forgive me when I harden my heart, when I refuse to care enough to bend and forgive, to feel as others feel and to offer that extra generosity that can heal and make right.

Teach me to see in others their gifts as well as their weaknesses.

Draw us together as friends, brothers and sisters of our living Lord, that, together our hearts may beat with your love for all. Amen.

We say together;

***THE LORD’S PRAYER***

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.

And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,

for ever and ever. Amen.

And now a prayer for the children as they go to Junior Church.

Lord, we pray for a blessing on junior church and their leaders as they leave us for their activities outdoors. May they enjoy all that they do and may they come to know you and your love in their lives. Amen

**Our second song is: Hymn 980 CMP Draw me close to You**

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| Verse: Draw me close to You, never let me go, I lay it all down again, to hear You say that I'm Your friend. You are my desire No one else will do, 'cause nothing else could take Your place, to feel the warmth of Your embrace. Help me find the way, bring me back to You. | Chorus: *You're all I want You're all I've ever needed You're all I want Help me know You are near.* |
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**Matthew 6:24 - 34**

No-one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Do not Worry

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not more valuable that they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Thanks be to God.

The second reading is: 1 Corinthians Chapter 4 verses 1 to 7

Apostles of Christ

So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not judge myself. My conscience is clear but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore, judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

Now brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, “Do not go beyond what is written.” Then you will not take pride in one man over against another. For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you did not?

Thanks be to God for the reading of His word.

**Our next hymn is 474RS Brother, sister, let me serve you**

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| 1.. 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. | 2.. 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. |
| 3.. 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. | 4.. 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. |
| 5.. 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. | 6.. 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. |
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**ADDRESS**

Don’t we sometimes get bogged down with this stuff called money? How many times in our lives have we been given the advice to put something aside for a rainy day? I use bible reading notes by Selwyn Hughes called, ‘Everyday with Jesus’ and I recall he commenting that he recorded that his father wrote these words for him, in the flyleaf of the bible he received when he was first converted: ‘Money is a universal provider for everything but happiness, and a passport to everywhere, except to heaven.’ The writer of Ecclesiastes, in chapter 5 verse 10, said ‘Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income.’ In a graveyard in Stoke-by-Nayland, Suffolk, there is a grave with the following epitaph, ‘Here in Stoke-by-Nayland once lived a wealthy miser who pulled down crows’ nests for fuel and got the usual reward for such thrift in having half a million of money half a minute before he died and nothing half a minute later.’ This is summed up in a saying that tells us, ‘there are no pockets in a shroud.'

We can so easily accept the things that the media bombard us with regarding ‘money’ rich people. They are reported as celebrities. We can read of examples of this in any newspaper we pick up on any day, and great store is placed upon these celebrities who have ‘loads of money’ and what they do or don’t do with it. One of the latest is that an anonymous person has agreed to pay 2 million pounds to ride in a space rocket to see the earth from space. We are not encouraged to ask where or how they obtained their riches, just to be interested in what they do or don’t do with their money or what whim takes them as they ‘buy’ a football club or which night club they frequent. They are important people! But it is questionable whether or not you see many of them looking happy or enthusiastic? It seems that they are too busy portraying the right image for the photographer or camera man who might be lurking.

Are we immune to this overkill? Can we ignore it? How do we react when we read of some of the antics in our newspapers or see items of ‘news’ on our televisions?

Do you recall the news item about Wayne Rooney when he was playing for Manchester United discovering that he was being issued with a fixed penalty parking ticket of £30.00 when he came out of a shop in Manchester with his arms full of packages and bags that he and his then girlfriend had just purchased. Even though he was parked illegally he persuaded the Traffic Warden not to issue the ticket. £30.00! And the money that he was on, I ask you!! ……. It can produce jealousy in all of us can’t it?

In our reading from 1 Corinthians, Paul is asking the Corinthians to accept him, Peter and Apollos as ‘servants of Christ,’ and, as those entrusted with the secret things of God. He had in previous chapters been talking about divisions in the Church when some had been saying, “I follow Paul,” or ‘I follow Apollos.’ Paul one of the ‘celebrities’ of his day is saying that he ought to be regarded as a servant, he also says in Galatians, chapter 2 verse 20, “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.” And in Philippians, chapter 1 verse 21, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” He was only willing to accept reflected glory from the Lord and, maybe, praise from God when the time was right.

Paul writes to Timothy, in 1 Timothy chapter 6 verses 9 & 10, “People who want to get rich fall into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.”

Jesus summed it up, in our first reading, when he said, “No-one can serve two masters, he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”

We all worry from time to time whether or not we have enough money for whatever life may throw at us. Can we pay the regular increases in our mortgages, the world petroleum prices are on the increase so can we absorb the cost of petrol for our cars? What about the almost daily rise in the cost of diesel, something that affects virtually every purchase we make because transport operates, in general, on diesel, and so these increases in fuel prices add to the cost of almost everything? We all have our own financial worries, or have had at some time in our lives and we also have our own ways of dealing with them.

Do you recall the ‘parable of the sower’? Jesus tells of the effects on seed which falls in various places, one of which is seed that falls among thorns which grew and choked the plants. In Matthew chapter 13 verse 22 Jesus explains this by saying, ‘The one who received the seed that fell among thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it making it unfruitful.’

Jesus had a deep understanding of worry and knew of its affect on ordinary people and after cautioning them about money he continues to give seven reasons for not worrying.

Verse 25, “Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what will you wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important then clothes?”

He is telling us that the same God who created life in us can be trusted with the details of our lives.

Verse 26, “Look at the birds of the air, they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”

Jesus tells us here that worrying about the future hampers daily lives, we need only what is sufficient and don’t need to store treasures away in barns.

Verse27, “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his daily life?”

Jesus is saying that worrying does not add to life but takes something away from it. While we are spending our time worrying we miss out on what is happening around us.

Verse 28-30, “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet, I tell you, that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you?”

We all need clothes to protect our bodies but I know I buy things that I see and like, not because I need them, but, you can’t miss out on a bargain can you. Jesus is confirming that God knows our needs and does not ignore those who depend on him.

Verse 31-32, “O you of little faith! So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.”

Jesus is saying that worrying shows a lack of faith and understanding of God.

Verse 33, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Jesus is pointing out the real challenges God wants us to pursue, and worrying keeps us from them.

And in Verse 34, “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

Jesus is telling us that taking one day at a time keeps us from being consumed with worry.

So what does this thing worry do to us? It saps our will, it takes away our self-esteem it focuses us on ourselves and our own problems, and prevents us from taking positive action. Jesus tells us we should not worry about things, but we can be concerned. Worry stops us doing things, concern invites us to action because it begs the question, what can we do about it?

There is a chorus that goes, ‘Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face, and the ways of the world will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.’

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No-one comes to the Father except by me.”

He invites us to take our worries and our concern to the foot of the cross and see them in context.

He says to us, “I am the bread of life” and ……. “Follow me.”

Amen.

**Our next hymn is: 515 CMP: O Love that wilt not let me go**

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| 1.. O love that will not let me go,  I rest my weary soul in Thee.  I give Thee back the life I owe,  That in Thine ocean depths its flow,  May richer fuller be. | 2.. O light that foll'west all my way,  I yield my flick'ring torch to Thee.  My heart restores its borrowed ray,  That in Thy sunshine's blaze it's day,  May brighter fairer be. |
| 3.. O joy that seekest me through pain,  I cannot close my heart to Thee.  I trace the rainbow through the rain,  And feel the promise is not vain,  That morn shall tearless be. | 4.. O cross that lifted up my head,  I dare not ask to fly from Thee.  I lay in dust life's glory dead,  And from the ground there blossoms red,  Life that shall endless be. |
| Albert Lister Peace George Matheson Public domain ccli 169737 Streaming licence 595811 | |

**We pray again as we pray for others -- Prayers of Intercession**

Father, we pray for the whole church, which you called into being

through your Son. We are aware that it is always your intention that your

church should be a blessing to all people everywhere. We ask that by

your Holy Spirit your church may be daily renewed and empowered for

the task for which you gave it life.

We pray, Father, that we and all our fellow Christians may be ready for

any sacrifice, any action, any declaration that will clearly demonstrate

faith, hope and love, to our neighbours, to those with whom we work, to

our family and friends and those we meet on the journey of life each day.

We pray for those who, because they know God has made them his

special people, do all that they can to make others special too; for those

involved in feeding the hungry, seeking the lost, healing the broken,

enabling the defeated; for those who care for the sick and the dying; for

those who care for others whose lives and emotions are in need of health

and healing.

We pray for those whose faith has lost meaning, whose worship is all

ritual and empty words, for those who are no longer aware of God’s

presence, his power or his love; for those who only see the hurt and the

pain and the darkness of life. We ask that they may see the joy and

goodness and the light of Christ in the lives of his people.

We pray for those we know who have been reduced to despair; for those

whose joy has been crushed by the indifference of others; for those who

have suffered great grief, who are left numb by sorrow and loss; for

those still overwhelmed by the separation death brings from someone

they loved and who loved them.

We pray for ourselves. In the face of all of life’s uncertainties, sorrows,

hurts, disappointments and failures, we ask that the reassurance of

Christ’s presence, power and love may give us strength, hope and faith.

In the name of Jesus we pray this.

The Lord hears our prayer. Thanks be to God. **Amen**

**Our final hymn is: 806CMP Beauty for brokenness** (Sung: v1, v2, chorus, v3, v4, chorus, v5, chorus)

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| 1.. Beauty for brokenness,  hope for despair,  Lord, in Your suffering world  this is our prayer.  Bread for the children,  justice, joy, peace,  sunrise to sunset,  Your kingdom increase. | 2.. Shelter for fragile lives,  cures for their ills,  work for the craftsmen,  trade for their skills;  land for the dispossessed,  rights for the weak,  voices to plead the cause  of those who can't speak. |
| 3.. Refuge from cruel wars,  havens from fear,  cities for sanctuary,  freedoms to share.  Peace to the killing-fields,  scorched earth to green,  Christ for the bitterness,  His cross for the pain. | 4.. Rest for the ravaged earth,  oceans and streams  plundered and poisened -  our future, our dreams.  Lord, end our madness,  carelesness, greed;  make us content with  the things that we need. |
| 5.. Lighten our darkness,  breathe on this flame  until Your justice  burns brightly again;  until the nations  learn of Your ways,  seek Your salvation  and bring You their praise. | Chorus: *God of the poor,*  *friend of the weak,*  *give us compassion we pray;*  *melt our cold hearts,*  *let tears fall like rain;*  *come, change our love*  *from a spark to a flame.* |
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**Blessing**

**May God who is light shine in our darkness.**

**May God who is love be the love between us.**

**May God who is life be our life, everlasting.**

**And the blessing of God, Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit**

**be with us and all people, now and always.** **Amen**.