



Stamford Methodist Church and Circuit



Order of Worship : Sunday 21st February 2021 **Resistance is futile**

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Today we are praying for Stamford church and Community before the service begins.

The theme of our worship today is drawn from our need to open our hearts to God and the experience of Jesus in His baptism and temptation, 'Resistance is futile'.

We begin with a moment of quiet and a time of worship.

Let us pray:

Lord, you are in this place, your presence fills it, your presence is peace.
Lord, you are in this place, your presence fills it, your presence is love.
Lord, you are in this place, your presence fills it, your presence is joy.
Lord of peace, love and joy, be with us as we worship you now.

Song: 'My Jesus, my saviour'
<https://youtu.be/dr78ff70XKQ>

My Jesus, my Saviour,
Lord, there is none like You.
All of my days I want to praise
The wonders of Your mighty love.
My comfort, my shelter,
Tower of refuge and strength,
Let every breath, all that I am,
Never cease to worship You.

Shout to the Lord all the earth, let us sing
Power and majesty, praise to the King.
Mountains bow down
And the seas will roar
At the sound of Your name.
I sing for joy at the work of Your hands.
Forever I'll love You, forever I'll stand.
Nothing compares to the
Promise I have in You.

Song: 'Only by grace'

<https://youtu.be/fnaQIMtQ820>

Only by grace can we enter,
Only by grace can we stand;
Not by our human endeavour,
But by the blood of the Lamb.
Into Your presence You call us,
You call us to come.
Into Your presence You draw us,
And now by Your grace we come,
Now by Your grace we come.

Lord, if You mark our transgressions,
Who would stand?
Thanks to Your grace we are cleansed
By the blood of the Lamb.

(Repeat)

Prayer of approach and confession

Lord, we thank you for your immeasurable grace, free and full;
We thank you for your love for us expressed most clearly through Jesus, our Saviour and Lord;
We thank you that you invite us to come close and know your presence, peace and love;

[take a moment of thanks and praise]

Forgive us when we forget you;
Forgive us when our words deny you;
Forgive us for our thoughtless actions and harmful ways;
Forgive us, Lord.

[Take a moment to say sorry to God}

In your loving grace we hear your word and sense your forgiving presence, although we do not deserve it.

Thank you for your accepting grace and inspire us, by your Spirit,
To live as loving, gracious people,
Forgiven, loved and free.

In Jesus name.

Amen

Song: 'I will offer up my life'
<https://youtu.be/5tYEo0DXcIE>

I will offer up my life
In spirit and truth,
Pouring out the oil of love
As my worship to You.
In surrender I must give my every part;
Lord, receive the sacrifice
Of a broken heart.

*Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring?
To so faithful a friend, to so loving a King?
Saviour, what can be said, what can be sung
As a praise of Your name
For the things You have done?
Oh, my words could not tell, not even in part,
Of the debt of love that is owed by this thankful heart.*

You deserve my every breath
For You've paid the great cost;
Giving up Your life to death,
Even death on a cross.
You took all my shame away,
There defeated my sin,
Opened up the gates of heaven,
And have beckoned me in.

Interview with Christian singer, songwriter and worship leader, Jason Silver.

1. Welcome Jason. In three sentences, tell us about how you came to faith in Christ and the ministry you offer.

Jason spoke of the importance of his Christian family whilst growing up and the growing sense of God's love for him as life has gone on. His ministry as a worship leader is a response to God's love and the desire for others to respond to that love of God too. He feels that his gifts of music and writing enable that response.

2. Jesus was tempted in the desert and clearly showed amazing courage and spiritual strength. When faced with problems, spiritual or otherwise, where have you found strength?

Jason finds strength in fellowship, in prayer and in the love of others.

3. You have written a setting of Psalm 51 which we will hear in a moment. What would you say is the strength of God's Word to sustain us and how can we express it in our lives?

God's Word offers something for every situation of life; the Psalms are real in their raw response to situations and either recognising or pleading for God's presence. IN this openness we, too, can find sustenance from God.

Psalm 51: 1 – 13 (sung by Jason Silver)

<https://youtu.be/yjsG6iHEUUE>

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.
Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.

Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.

Gospel Reading: Mark 1: 9 – 15 (Lumo project Video online)

The baptism and testing of Jesus

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'

At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, 13 and he was in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted[a] by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'

Address

Didn't it pull at our heart strings during last week's service and we all gave an audible, 'Ahh' when Tulle sadly announced he hadn't received a Valentine when Phil had had the usual dozen?

And how relieved were you when, at the end of Phil's time with Lambsy and Tulle last Sunday to see Tulle receive a Valentine's Card?

[Click here to watch again! Forward to 8 mins 25 seconds] <https://youtu.be/2YxxBsj0FLY>

We all like to be liked and love to be loved and it makes all the difference when we are affirmed in that way – whether on a special occasion like Valentines or a birthday, and maybe more so in the everyday when least expected.

The Bible readings today call us to have hearts ready and open to receive – clean hearts; and to focus on Jesus for affirmation and strength.

So I simply want to remind us of three things today:

1. The importance of affirmation
2. The problem of temptation
3. The assurance of God's presence

Mark draws us in to the moment of Jesus baptism.

Here is a significant moment of affirmation for Jesus and the wonderful declaration from God,

'This is my Son with whom I am well pleased'.

God affirms Jesus at the beginning of his earthy ministry.

But let's be very clear. This affirmation was not intended for Jesus himself. He was fully aware of his status as the one sent from God. As John tells us in his Gospel,

'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God ... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling with us' (John 1: 1 and 14)

No this affirmation was for the bystanders, those who were there to witness the baptism and heard the voice of God, 'This is my Son.' In other words, here I am. I told you I would come and make a difference, and I'm here to show you how to do it.

The moment when you are recognised for your best potential and affirmed. I wonder if that is how Jesus felt at that moment – the voice spoke, his Father from whom he came, and everyone heard it. Jesus was powered up, affirmed and ready.

Are you in a place to hear the affirmation of God?

To recognise God's power in an act of love, a generous deed, an amazing example – God works with us and through us when we offer our potential and are willing to be led by the Spirit.

[Pause]

The willingness to be led by the Spirit is a dangerous thing. What happened to Jesus next?

After the affirmation comes the moment of temptation – notice he was 'led by the Spirit.'

This is classic Mark's Gospel stuff, not only did this happen just after Jesus' baptism and the moment of elation, it happened 'immediately'.

When we are enjoying a moment, sometimes we drop our guard and the unexpected happens.

For Jesus, he was led in to the desert for forty days and was tempted by Satan. Mark doesn't give us the detail that we find in the other Gospels, but we are told that Jesus was faced with the corruption of power, the deceit of lies and the weakness of humanity. And in all of this he stayed firm and did not give in.

The important thing to note here is that Jesus was 'led by the Spirit'. The man who was God inside did not rely on human strength but on the Spirit and presence of God.

We are living in testing times; you don't need me to tell you that.

Faced with

- the corruption of our bodies by a vicious virus;
- the deceit of scammers who take their chances while we are at our most vulnerable;
- the weakness of political structures and systems.

How is it for you today? Are you feeling

- hopeful?
- Fearful?
- Inspired?
- Worried?

... and where is God for you?

The God who led Jesus by the Spirit into the wilderness is the same God who is in this Covid wilderness with you and with me.

Make time to see God alongside you, to hear his lament and join in with it and know his strength.

He is with us.

And finally, and briefly, notice that *angels attended Jesus*.

'Tempted, taunted, yet undaunted', says the hymn, and so it was for Jesus.

As he came through the high and then the low, he was ministered to by angels.

I simply want to ask, who are the ministering angels for you?

And who is God asking you to minister to at this time? It may be

- hopeful?
- Fearful?
- Inspired?
- Worried?

Be affirmed,

Stand firm in the presence of God,

And be God's presence for others.

Let us pray as we listen to some music and reflect on God's call to us today.

Prayers of concern

Let us pray.

Let us hold before God in confidence:

- † The ones who laugh when we are funny
The ones who make us smile at ourselves
- † The ones for whom we weep
The ones, who in joy or sorrow, weep for us
- † The ones who worry that we may be lonely
The ones who ensure that that does not happen
- † The ones who feed our minds and bodies
The ones with whom we share faith and break bread
- † The ones who reveal in themselves what is hidden
And the ones who treat as precious all we confide in them
- † The ones who we want to pray for
And the ones who, unasked, will pray for us
- † LORD, hear us; Lord' graciously hear us.

The Lord's Prayer (a setting by Jason Silver)

<https://youtu.be/w2vSnQ3JASk>

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.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.

And now may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Be with you, with those for whom we have prayer and with all God's people,
Now and forever,
Amen.

Hymn: 'We have a Gospel to proclaim'

<https://youtu.be/rMPtkPK2LIQ>

We have a gospel to proclaim,
good news for all throughout the earth;
the gospel of a Saviour's name:
we sing his glory, tell his worth.

Tell of his birth at Bethlehem —
not in a royal house or hall,
but in a stable dark and dim,
the Word made flesh, a light for all.

Tell of his death at Calvary:
hated by those he came to save,
in lonely suffering on the cross,
for all he loved his life he gave.

Tell of that glorious Easter morn:
empty the tomb, for he was free.
He broke the power of death and hell
that we might share his victory.

Tell of his reign at God's right hand,
by all creation glorified.
He sends his Spirit on his Church
to live for him, the Lamb who died.

Now we rejoice to name him King:
Jesus is Lord of all the earth.
This gospel-message we proclaim:
we sing his glory, tell his worth.