

CMR CH4 10.30 am

PRAISE: Hy 70 Give praise and thanks unto the Lord
Prayer

PRAISE: Hy 125 Lord of all being, throned afar

READING: Matthew 9:9-13

PRAISE: Hy 351 Jesus' hands were kind hands,

READING: Romans 8:1-11

Prayer

PRAISE: Hy 543 Longing for light, we wait in darkness
Christ, be our light!

SERMON

PRAISE: Hy 336 Christ is our light!

Benediction. Go in peace,
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God
and Fellowship in the Holy Spirit, be with us all **AMEN**

CH4 70

Give praise and thanks unto the Lord,
for bountiful is he;
his tender mercy doth endure
unto eternity.

God's mighty works who can express?
or show forth all his praise?
Blessèd are they that judgment keep,
and justly do always.

Remember me, Lord, with that love
which thou to thine dost bear;
with thy salvation, O my God,
to visit me draw near.

That I thy chosen's good may see,
and in their joy rejoice;
and may with thine inheritance
triumph with cheerful voice.

Blest be Jehovah, Israel's God,
to all eternity:
let all the people say, Amen.
Praise to the Lord give ye.

Almighty and Eternal God, we enter your Presence in our separate situations because we have been drawn by your Love and your Majesty. We cannot meet together in the sanctuary we love – but we still want to worship you.

Help us to open up our minds and our hearts to the knowledge of your presence with us. Help us to look out into our world and see the wonder of Creation – which is always there for us and never stops. We notice the beauty of the daffodils and tulips – growing on from year to year without our help. We see and hear the birds as they continue to build their nests as the days lengthen. We rejoice when we see the lambs appearing in the fields. We watch the buds filling on branches on the hedges and trees. We rejoice to see the coming of Spring again.

As we continue our journey through Lent towards Easter, we are heartened by what we see of your Creation in our world – telling us of your interest in us and your love for us through the awakening of Nature around us.

Lord, our God, we don't always see what is around us and how much you are in it for us. Forgive our blindness and help us to open ourselves to be aware of you being present with us and for us. Forgive us when our blindness has taken us in wrong directions – especially when we have turned away from you and the love you were wanting to show to us.

Help us to recognise you and be at home in your company – so that we may be renewed and strengthened for our service of you and our living in our community.

We ask our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord

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 debts,

as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil,

For Thine is the kingdom,

and the power, and the glory,

For ever

AMEN

CH4 125

Lord of all being, throned afar,
thy glory flames from sun and star;
centre and soul of every sphere,
yet to each loving heart how near!

Sun of our life, thy quickening ray
sheds on our path the glow of day;
Star of our hope, thy softened light
cheers the long watches of the night.

Our midnight is thy smile withdrawn,
our noontide is thy gracious dawn,
our rainbow arch thy mercy's sign;
all, save the clouds of sin, are thine.

Lord of all life, below, above,
whose light is truth, whose warmth is love,
before thy ever-blazing throne
we ask no lustre of our own.

Grant us thy truth to make us free,
and kindling hearts that burn for thee,
till all thy living altars claim
one holy light, one heavenly flame.

William Henry Gladstone (1840-1891)

Matthew 9:9-13

⁹ Jesus left that place, and as he walked along, he saw a tax collector, named Matthew, sitting in his office. He said to him, "Follow me."

Matthew got up and followed him.

¹⁰ While Jesus was having a meal in Matthew's house, many tax collectors and other outcasts came and joined Jesus and his disciples at the table. ¹¹ Some Pharisees saw this and asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with such people?"

¹² Jesus heard them and answered, "People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick. ¹³ Go and find out what is meant by the scripture that says: 'It is kindness that I want, not animal sacrifices.' I have not come to call respectable people, but outcasts."

CH4 351

Jesus' hands were kind hands, doing good to all,
Healing pain and sickness, blessing children small;
Washing tired feet, and saving those who fall;
Jesus' hands were kind hands, doing good to all.

Take my hands, Lord Jesus, let them work for you,
Make them strong and gentle, kind in all I do;
Let me watch you, Jesus, till I'm gentle too,
Till my hands are kind hands, quick to work for you.

Margaret Beatrice Cropper (1886-1980)

Romans 8:1-11 Life in the Spirit

¹ There is no condemnation now for those who live in union with Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit, which brings us life in union with Christ Jesus, has set me free from the law of sin and death. ³ What the Law could not do, because human nature was weak, God did. He condemned sin in human nature by sending his own Son, who came with a nature like sinful human nature, to do away with sin. ⁴ God did this so that the righteous demands of the Law might be fully satisfied in us who live according to the Spirit, and not according to human nature. ⁵ Those who live as their human nature tells them to, have their minds controlled by what human nature wants. Those who live as the Spirit tells them to, have their minds controlled by what the Spirit wants. ⁶ To be controlled by human nature results in death; to be controlled by the Spirit results in life and peace. ⁷ And so people become enemies of God when they are controlled by their human nature; for they do not obey God's law, and in fact they cannot obey it. ⁸ Those who obey their human nature cannot please God.

⁹ But you do not live as your human nature tells you to; instead, you live as the Spirit tells you to — if, in fact, God's Spirit lives in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ lives in you, the Spirit is life for you because you have been put right with God, even though your bodies are going to die because of sin. ¹¹ If the Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from death, lives in you, then he who raised Christ from death will also give life to your mortal bodies by the presence of his Spirit in you.

Most gracious God, we are aware of your greatness and power. We thank you that you have created us and set us to live in this world, with all its resources. We thank you for the abilities we have – to see all that is in the world and the ways in which it can be used to the benefit of many. We thank you that we have knowledge and foresight – so that we can anticipate seasons – and prepare the ground for the growing season which is to come. We are glad to know that you have made us in such a way that we can develop in spiritual ways – as well as physical ones. You have made us able to live our lives together in society and cope with its difficulties.

We're aware that we need more than our own abilities and skills to deal with the present crisis. Lord, imbue us with love and understanding for all those who share our country – especially those who are most vulnerable because of age or health. Enable us to think of them and their safety in everything we plan to do. Help us to hold them all in our prayers – and especially those whom we know to be ill or at risk.

We're aware of how widespread this crisis is – how many countries and people are affected by it. We pray for all those who are living in isolation or in hospital; all those who are fearful that the virus may strike them or members of their family. We thank you for the dedication of doctors, nurses, hospital staff, and all emergency workers who are giving their all in the situation.

We're also aware that there are other problems in our world which should not be forgotten.

We pray for all places where there is continuing strife – where warfare destroys culture and history – where it breaks down communities and brings death, injury and ill health to so many. We pray that those who think in this way will see that war is not a solution because it can only destroy. We pray that people will seek positive ways of overcoming differences and difficulties – and will work together towards solutions – rather than seeking confrontations.

We pray for those who are in danger;
for those who are ill at home or in hospital;
for those who are overcome with anxiety or fear;
for those who walk in the valley of the shadow;
for all those experiencing the sadness of separation
and bereavement.

Uphold them and strengthen them with your love for the days and the duties that lie ahead of them. May they all be aware that you are the one who gives rest and peace.

God of life and glory, we are able to share in the inheritance of the saints. They are always with us on our pilgrimage through life. We thank you for all they continue to mean to us. Inspire and guide us by their lives.

We ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. AMEN

CH4 543

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.

Christ, be our light!

Shine in our hearts.

Shine through the darkness.

Christ, be our light!

Shine in your Church gathered today.

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice.

Longing for food, many are hungry.
longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.

Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.

(Matthew 9:9-13; Romans 8:1-11)

Matthew 9:9 seems a simple straightforward statement and yet hides much and means a great deal.

"Jesus said to Matthew, "Follow me". Matthew got up and followed him".

What do we know about Matthew? He was a Jew. What did he do? He was what was called a *PUBLICANUS* in Latin, translated as "Publican" but more accurately "Tax Collector". Even that translation gives a false impression for our tax collectors are civil servants, employed by the Government to collect taxes for the Government, using a previously agreed formula. In the Roman Empire tax was collected in the various countries by the method of tender. Individuals would pay the Romans a lump sum for the right to collect taxes in a given area for a certain time. They would then recoup their investment by collecting taxes in ways and places that suited them – not by a standard method. It was possible for the Publicanus to become extremely rich.

In general the position of tax collector is an unpopular one. In the Roman and Jewish situation there were other dimensions which led to the Publicanus being counted an outcast from his Faith.

a) The Tender system allowed the Publicanus to become very wealthy at the expense of his fellow Jews so there was envy as well as ordinary unwillingness to pay up.

b) The Publicanus worked for the Romans who were an occupying power so national feeling also came into the picture.

c) In religious circles this was further compounded by the fact that work for and regular contact with non-Jews made a person unclean in the ritual religious sense.

Taken together, these items meant that the Publicanus was unpopular, unacceptable in most circles of Jewish life.

When Jesus asked Matthew to follow him and become one of his close disciples, he was taking a step which would antagonise many religious leaders and would even raise tensions within the group of disciples – some of whom were Nationalists. This gives us an insight into Jesus' mind and a practical expression to the love of God being extended to all, including those who would have been called the "Lost of Israel". This was made even plainer when Jesus accepted an invitation to a meal at Matthew's house where he would be meeting other outcasts similar to Matthew. Jesus' answer to criticism was to say that his message from God was meant for all, and especially those who knew that they had a need for it.

In saying this he is praising those who came to listen to him because they are seeking. This is in contrast to the Pharisees who are so sure of their own position before God that they are arrogant and superior to other "ordinary" people. They thought themselves so good that they did not need to search any further.

In Matthew's friends Jesus found people who were willing to listen with interest and gladness because they heard that there was a place for them with God – a place that had been denied to them by the Pharisees' rules and regulations.

In the following verses Jesus uses the very vivid picture of using new cloth to patch a hole in an old garment; and of new wine being put into old, brittle wineskins to illustrate a point. The people knew how disastrous such events could be.

He is saying that his message of God's love and the power of the Spirit are too strong and vital to be squeezed into and held by the old, rigid ways of thinking which had been developed by the very legalistic ways within Judaism. Judaism had put many of its people outside the religious circle, declaring them unclean and not eligible for its benefits, including peace with God.

Paul's words in Romans 8 cover the same ground. Paul had been trained as a Pharisee and had found it a barren experience. While he found dissatisfaction, he knew that others could become TOO satisfied by living with the regulations, which would stifle the Spirit. The answer is not the right observance of a myriad of regulations but rather having the same mind as Jesus himself in our dealings with people and with God. This does not come easily. It requires spiritual insight and a lot of hard work.

As Paul says, it often requires us to work against what our human nature wants to do. We have to discipline and control our human nature so that we can live with the love and the insights that come from Jesus.

He had to work against the regulations and ideas that had become part of his tradition. He did not flout them just for the sake of doing that – he did so because his priority was the love of God and he had to oppose and contradict anything which prevented it from working properly. This characterised much of Jesus' ministry and it gives us the pattern by which we may seek to guide our own thinking and living.

“But if Christ lives in you, the Spirit is life for you because you have been put right with God, even though your bodies are going to die through sin. If the Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from death, lives in you, then he who raised Christ from death will also give life to your mortal bodies by the presence of the Spirit in you”. AMEN

May God bless this meditation on his Word.

CH4 336

Christ is our light! The bright and morning star
Covering with radiance all from near and far.
Christ be our light, shine on, shine on we pray
into our hearts, into our world today.

Christ is our love! Baptised that we may know
the love of God among us, swooping low.
Christ be our love, bring us to turn our face
and see in you the light of heaven's embrace.

Christ is our joy! Transforming wedding guest!
Through water turned to wine the feast was blessed.
Christ be our joy; your glory let us see.
as your disciples did in Galilee.

Leith Fisher

Tune Highland Cathedral

Benediction. Go in peace,
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God
and Fellowship in the Holy Spirit, be with us all **AMEN**

CH4 786

May the God of peace go with us
as we travel from this place;
may the love of Jesus keep us
firm in hope and full of grace.

Tune: Ae fond kiss