

Darlington Methodist District
Worship at Home Sunday 12th September 2021

Lord, here is a follower of Christ who is suffering as he watches the person he loves weaken and die; as he wonders about a God who allows suffering and untimely death. Lord, we pray for those who suffer because those they love are suffering.

Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

Lord, here is a follower of Christ who is suffering as she watches the church betray its calling to suffering, redeeming love; she sees it becoming comfortable, apathetic, inward-looking. Lord, we pray for those who suffer because of the church's failure to walk the way of the cross.

Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

We make our prayers in the name of Christ, who did not turn his back on the way of suffering love, but died on the cross to reveal to us the victory of that love.

Amen

Hymn StF506 H&P799

My heart is full of Christ

Blessing

The love of the Father enfold us,
The wisdom of the Son enlighten us,
The fire of the Spirit inflame us;
The blessing of God be upon us and abide with us,
Now and for ever,
Amen

Bible quotes are from NRSVA; online quotes are at bible.oresmus.org

Prayers are from various sources including MWB.

Other prayers and all reflections written by Rev Tony Buglass, supernumerary minister in the Tynedale Circuit.

Gathering in worship

As a family gathered, in all our different homes and places, we gather in the name and in the presence of the living God who makes us one.

Hymn StF56 H&P499

King of Glory, King of Peace

Prayers

Lord God, when the shadow of the cross falls across our way, and we are tempted to find an easier path, help us to follow Jesus. When the challenges of our faith weigh heavily upon us, and we yearn for a lighter burden, help us to follow Jesus. When we are worn down by the scorn or ignorance of those who do not share our faith, and we are tempted to compromise, help us to follow Jesus. Give us the grace to carry the cross, so that we may share in the resurrection, in the name of Jesus, *Amen*.

Reading: [Isa.50:4-9a](#)

Speaking out for God has consequences...

Reading: [Mk.8:27-32](#)

'Messiah' is more than just a title...

Hymn StF35 The trumpets sound, the angels sing
H&P611 I am the bread of life

Reflection

What we say has consequences... It seemed like a simple question: "What do people say about me?" We can imagine the conversation, the laughter: "John the Baptist - but he's dead!" "Who do you say I am?" That was a little more awkward. Perhaps there had been discussions around a camp fire, when Jesus had gone off on his own to pray. An awkward silence -

then Peter blurts it out: "You're the Messiah." In Matthew, Jesus praises Peter for getting it; in all the Gospels he tells them to keep it to themselves. There were a lot of ideas about Messiah, many thought he would be the next military leader, who would come to throw out the Romans - the one thing Jesus did not want was a mob looking for a fight with the Romans.

What came next was even more surprising. Whatever they thought about Messiah, they didn't expect Jesus to say it would mean his death. Peter tried to reassure him - but Jesus called him Satan! That must have hurt. We can imagine Peter's face, the open-mouthed shock: but for Jesus, knowing that it meant the cross, anything that suggested it might not be necessary was a temptation. This isn't about finding the easiest way, but about tackling things head-on; that's what it meant to be Messiah, and therefore what it would mean to be followers of Messiah.

It has always been difficult to follow in God's way. The Servant Songs in Isa.40-55 first celebrate being called to be the one who speaks for God, but then talk about how speaking for God invites trouble and opposition, and needs God's support to keep going, and indeed can lead to suffering and martyrdom.

So it has been for those who have followed Jesus in every age and nation. When the Church has supported the powers that be, there has been popularity, status, privilege. When the Church has offered happy times, lovely services, Christmas celebrations, weddings and baptisms as family parties, people have been very happy to have the Church in their lives. When the Church has spoken out against oppression, asked searching questions of the rich and powerful, condemned the selfishness which has left so many in poverty, then there has been a backlash. Christians have been arrested and imprisoned or martyred, those who have dared to speak out have been attacked or even murdered; those who have spoken against social greed have been told not to mix religion and politics, to

stick to doing the religious stuff in church that they were sent to do.

What we say has consequences. If we say 'Jesus is Lord' then that means we have to do something about it. 'Who do you say that I am?' Our answer is not just in what we say, but how we live.

Intercessions

Lord, here is a follower of Christ who is suffering: he is persecuted because he believes in you; he is afraid for himself and for those he loves. Lord, we pray for those who suffer from persecution in your name.

Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

Lord, here is a follower of Christ who is suffering: she has been beaten, tortured and thrown into jail for standing up for the rights of her fellow human beings. Lord, we pray for those who suffer to win liberation for the oppressed.

Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

Lord, here is a follower of Christ who is suffering: his body is near to exhaustion, his heart is near to breaking as he feeds and tends those dying of starvation and disease in a famine-ridden land. Lord, we pray for those who suffer at the plight of the world's hungry.

Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

Lord, here is a follower of Christ who is suffering: she finds that the people God has called her to love distrust and reject her because the colour of her skin, her accent, her background, are different from hers. Lord, we pray for those who suffer through the prejudiced attitude of others.

Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.