

Summer Series Week 4 12th August

Transformation through Sacrifice

Call to Worship: Revelation 4: 10-11

Hymn: Stf 347 Crown him with many crowns

Responsive Reading: Psalm 146 (StF 837)

Prayer of Adoration

Let us praise and adore God who created all that is.

I will praise the Lord as long as I live.

I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

Let us praise and adore God who calls all people to live God's way of life and love.

I will praise the Lord as long as I live.

I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

Let us praise and adore God who in Jesus lives, healed, preached, dies and rose again to lead us into abundant life.

I will praise the Lord as long as I live.

I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

Let us praise God who in the Spirit challenges and consoles, holds us safe and leads us onwards.

I will praise the Lord as long as I live.

I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

Hymn: 352 In Christ Alone

Reading: Mark 10:17-22

Hymn: StF 254 Seek ye first the kingdom of God

Reflection: Transformed through Sacrifice

Charles Studd, one of the best cricketers in England in years past once said, “If Christ be God and died for me, there can be no sacrifice too great for me to make for him.”

Charles Studd had already been a missionary in India and was now considering going as a missionary to Africa. His doctor advised against this on the grounds that he had health issues. Friends and family felt he could serve God in England as much as he could in Africa. It was in response to these concerns that Studd spoke of the sacrifice of Christ. Studd had been transformed by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and was prepared in stark contrast to the rich young man to go to Africa as a living sacrifice for Christ.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor who defied Hitler is once said to have said these words, “When Christ calls a man, he bids him to come and die.” Bonhoeffer was not necessarily speaking of physical death, just as it is the case that to be a living sacrifice for Christ does not mean selling all we have and giving it to the poor. The young man whom Jesus spoke to could not make the sacrifice Jesus demanded because his security was his possessions, as opposed to Studd and Bonhoeffer who had been transformed by the sacrificial love of Jesus on the cross and were therefore prepared to follow Jesus in the path of sacrificial love. Transformed by the sacrifice of Jesus there was no sacrifice too great for them to make for Him. Jesus is still speaking to us one thing – “Follow me”. Transformed through sacrifice.

See from his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Note:

In addition you may wish to read the following passage from ‘Holy Habits’.

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Part of the Call

Living sacrificially is integral to the adventure of following Jesus. When we considered the callings of the first disciples we noted how this was so, right from the outset as 'they left everything and followed him'.¹⁰ Whilst this leaving did not involve a complete severing of ties or selling of everything it was none the less costly in terms of personal ambition, relationships and earning potential. And costly, too, for their families and friends. We don't bear the cost of discipleship alone.

In the Gospels there are many symbols which represent the sacrificial nature of Christian discipleship. The cross is of course the supreme symbol and we also have the narrow way¹¹ and the yoke.¹² Reflecting on the image of the yoke we find these words in the 1975 version of the Methodist Covenant Service preceding the prayer of discipleship commitment:

Beloved in Christ, let us again claim for ourselves this Covenant which God has made with his people, and take the yoke of Christ upon us.

To take this yoke upon us means that we are content that he appoint us our place and work, and that he himself be our reward.

Christ has many services to be done: some are easy, others are difficult; some bring honour, others bring reproach; some are suitable to our natural inclinations and material interests, others are contrary to both. In some we may please Christ and please ourselves, in others we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves. Yet the power to do all things is given us in Christ, who strengthens us.¹³

John and Mary Bramley are a lovely Christian couple from my home town of Stafford. John lived out his discipleship as an orthopaedic surgeon whilst Mary lived hers as a nurse. In addition John was a lay preacher and together they hosted a fellowship group in their home. Having given of themselves gladly and generously, when the time came for retirement no-one could have begrudged them a retirement filled with grandchildren, cruises, coach trips and tea cakes at garden centres. But these extraordinary, ordinary disciples were willing to sacrifice that for a few years and went to serve as medical missionaries in a leprosy mission hospital in Bhutan. It was deeply humbling to hear John explaining why they were going, saying that they could not pray

the prayers they prayed and sing the hymns and songs they sang without being willing to respond to the call of Jesus. And so they went to share in the healing, loving work of Jesus in that far away country. Writing at the age of eighty-one, having been back home for sixteen years, survived a heart attack and now surrounded by grandchildren, John said:

It has been my Christian faith and experience that in spite of adverse circumstances, sometimes created by my own failures, and sometimes beyond my control, that ultimately all things have worked together for good in my life, with undeserved blessings and strong hope for the future.¹⁴

Prayers of Confession

Dear God, I acknowledge that every good and perfect gift is from you.
I am sorry that sometimes I have made the gifts more important than you the giver.

I acknowledge that the heart of worship is all about you.

Once again, I confess that I am no longer my own but yours.

Your will not mine be done in all things.

Wherever you may place me,

In all that I do and in all that I may endure,

I offer this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord who taught us to pray

Our Father, who art in heaven.....

Offertory hymn: StF Take my life

Prayers for Healing and Transformation

Methodist Worship Book pp 411 – 412

Hymn: StF 545 Be thou my vision

Blessing:

May the creative energy of God the Father

The sacrificial saving love of God the Son

The life transforming power of God the Holy Spirit

Be with each and every one of us

Now and evermore.

Amen