

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020 10:30 am

Rev'd Tony and Cathy Morling

## Welcome and Candle Lighting

### Call to Worship

Lord, we come into your awesome presence, from the shadows into your radiance. May the light of your presence guide our worship today. Amen .

### Hymn: Be Thou my Vision

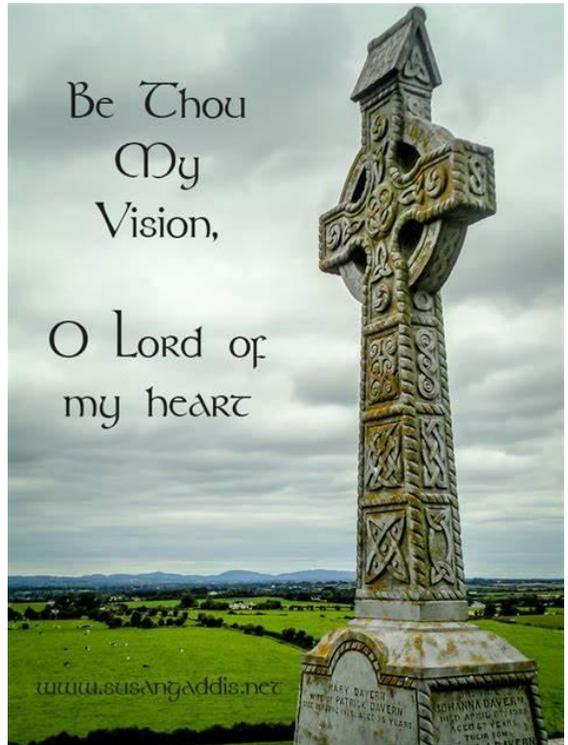
(Singing the Faith 545)

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/hymns/be-thou-my-vision-o-lord-of-my-heart-stf-545/>

Be thou my vision,  
O Lord of my heart,  
be all else but naught to me,  
save that thou art;  
be thou my best thought  
in the day and the night,  
both waking and sleeping,  
thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom,  
be thou my true word,  
be thou ever with me,  
and I with thee, Lord;  
be thou my great Father,  
thy child let me be;  
be thou in me dwelling,  
and I one with thee.

Be thou my breastplate,  
my sword for the fight;  
be thou my whole armour,  
be thou my true might;  
be thou my soul's shelter,  
be thou my strong tower:  
O raise thou me heavenward,



great Power of my power.

Riches I heed not,  
nor earth's empty praise:  
be thou mine inheritance  
now and always;  
be thou and thou only  
the first in my heart:  
O Sovereign of heaven,  
my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven,  
thou heaven's bright Sun,  
O grant me its joys  
after victory is won;  
Great Heart of my own heart,  
whatever befall,  
still be thou my vision,  
O Ruler of all.

*Irish, 8th century - translated by  
Mary Elizabeth Byrne (1880-1931)-  
versified by Eleanor Henrietta Hull  
(1860-1935) (alt.)*



***Let us pray together...***

### **Prayer of Praise and Invocation**

Lord Jesus, Light of the World;  
You came to turn our world  
upside down,  
or rather the right way up.

Word of God made flesh,  
You came to show us how to truly  
live, to love and to serve;  
how to live out the values  
of your kingdom here on earth.

As we gather to praise you  
for all that you are  
and all that you bring, we pray;  
'mirrored here,  
may our lives tell your story'  
today and every day.

**Amen.**

### **Prayer of Confession**

Lord we acknowledge that there  
have been times when we have  
not shared the riches of your  
kingdom with others.

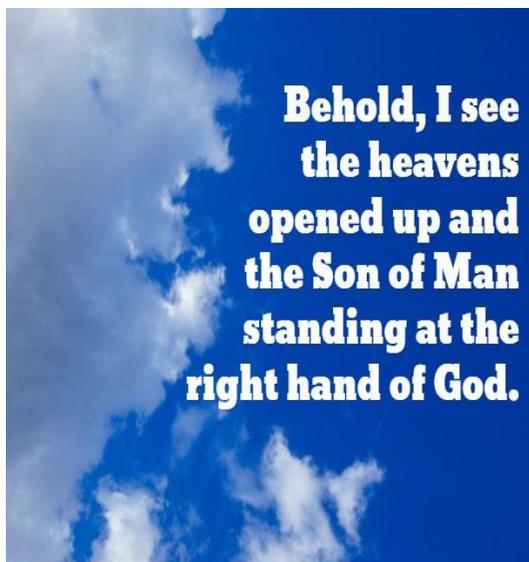
Times when we have taken the  
easy route, choosing options that  
require less time, less energy, less  
thought.

Times when we have turned back  
to the ways of the world, that are  
contrary to the values of your  
kingdom. - And in a moment of  
quiet we bring into your light our  
own personal confessions.

Lord, we remember you are a God  
of mercy and grace, who forgives  
us and transforms us, by the  
power of your Spirit, into the  
people you have truly made us to  
be. **Amen.**

**Today's NT Reading: Acts 7:54-8:4**

When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."



At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at

the feet of a young man named Saul.

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

**Time to Reflect:-**

***'Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went'.***

John Wesley once said, "I love a commodious room, a soft cushion, a handsome pulpit". However, opposition to his radical preaching meant that the handsome pulpits of 18th century England were no longer accessible to him.

On April 2nd, 1739, he recorded in his journal the first time he preached outside the confines of the building, "at four in the afternoon I submitted to be more

vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation...”

The paradox is that the Methodist revival really got going after Wesley faced the disaster of being barred from speaking in church buildings and stepped into the market place where he could be overheard by all. Similarly, the early church in Jerusalem began to fulfil their calling to preach to all nations after the horror of Stephen’s killing in Acts 8:4.



Both of these great movements of God were breathed into life because Christians faced events that they did not want or choose, but to which they responded with courage and faith.

History teaches us that Wesley discovered profound benefits as he preached outside the building, as did the early Christians, *‘wherever they went’*.

My Dad used to say, ‘It’s an ill wind that blows no good’. By that, I think he meant that there is nearly always some good in the most difficult of situations. St Paul, would write to the church in Rome, “that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

This week the cross has been replaced on the steeple of St Thomas’s. The cross is the ultimate reminder that after the horror of the cross comes the empty tomb, after Good Friday there is Easter Day. The cross stands tall declaring amidst suffering there is always hope, always blessing.

So I have been asking people whether they can identify any benefits from this awful, unwelcome pandemic. Despite the many lives lost, the disruption to incomes and jobs and confinement to our homes, are there God-given blessings that people discern?

The responses have been heart-warming and encouraging. They include:

I'll never take for granted the dedication and skills of essential services that care for all in our community. Cheering on a Thursday night was so special.

I know my neighbours so much better and had real conversations with them about faith.

I've really had to rely on God. I've spent more time reading my bible and praying.

Now that I'm dipping my toes back into worship, I like reading the hymns, shorter sermons, but missing the chat over coffee!

My church has shown that it can adapt and change to new circumstances. I have a new sense of belonging to the Circuit.

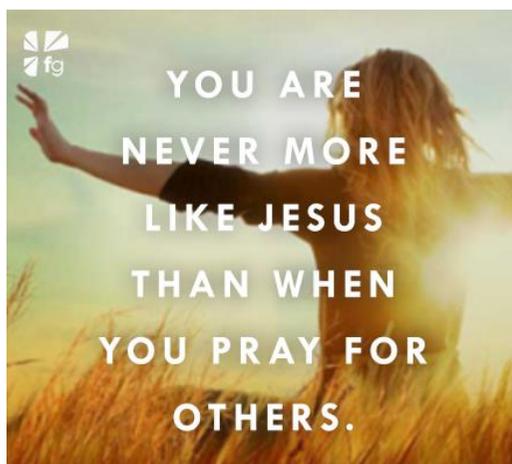
The church has been open even though the building has been closed. It has made me think about being part of a gathered church and a scattered church.

It's the first time that I have really benefited from digital communications. The on-line services have helped me to worship with others on a Sunday.

It has made me realise that I can make a difference by telephoning someone up and asking how they are.

Perhaps you too can identify some blessings amidst the storm? Can I suggest that we start to make a note of them? This week we have seen a glimmer of hope with the possibility of a vaccine.

That is still a way off, but now is the time to remember all that God is teaching us amidst this crisis.



These God given gems of wisdom may be the truths that will help guide us all in the future. That was the case for John Wesley and the very early church. And it may be true for us too.

## **A time of prayer**

We pray for places where people face persecution - for their faith and are not free to worship you, and for people who have not yet heard the Good News of Jesus;

*Lord, help us shine your light and share our faith.*

We pray for those who fear for the future, those facing job uncertainty or loss, those anxious about the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic;

*Lord, help us shine your light and share your hope.*

We pray for the churches to which we belong, asking that we might gain your truth and wisdom for the future.

*Lord, help us shine your light and share your love.*

We pray for the technicians who are seeking to develop vaccines in many countries.

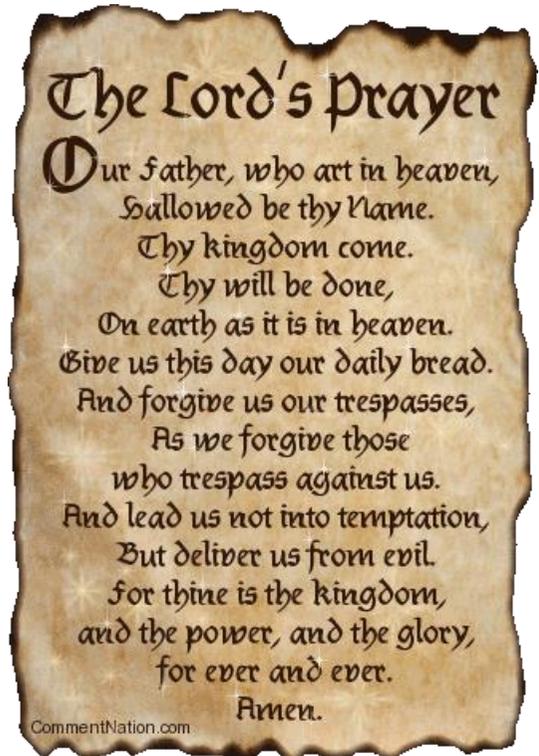
Thank you for their skill and dedication and guide them in their research.

Lord, help us shine your light and share our faith.  
In a moment of quiet we bring before you our personal prayers.

Lord, we remember 'the light of your love is always shining' as we offer you these prayers in Jesus' name.  
Amen.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father .....



## Hymn: Hear the Call of the Kingdom

(Singing the Faith 407)

<https://youtu.be/d5AKyRFIKaM>

Hear the call of the kingdom,  
lift your eyes to the King;  
let his song rise within you  
as a fragrant offering  
of how God, rich in mercy,  
came in Christ to redeem  
all who trust in his unfailing grace.

Hear the call of the kingdom  
to be children of light  
with the mercy of heaven,  
the humility of Christ;  
walking justly before him,  
loving all that is right,  
that the life of Christ may shine  
through us.

*King of heaven,  
we will answer the call.  
We will follow,  
bringing hope to the world,  
filled with passion,  
filled with power to proclaim  
salvation in Jesus' name.*



Hear the call of the kingdom  
to reach out to the lost  
with the Father's compassion  
in the wonder of the cross,  
bringing peace and forgiveness,  
and a hope yet to come:  
let the nations  
put their trust in him.

*King of heaven, we will answer the call ...  
Keith Getty (b. 1974), Kristyn Getty (b.  
1980) and Stuart Townend (b. 1963)*

### A prayer of blessing

As we are sent out  
to live as children of light;  
May we walk in faith,  
be sustained by hope,  
and share  
the all-embracing love of God  
with everyone we meet.  
Amen.

*Original material by Rachel Atkinson  
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