

Poole Bay Methodist Circuit Worship
Sunday 7th December 2025

It's not about me – but you Jesus! - Led by Reverend Sarah Knebel

Hello and welcome to this time of worship. Our reading, today, speaks of a message for the whole world and our gaze is drawn away from concern with ourselves to see a bigger picture, it's not about us, it's about Jesus. And so we come to worship Christ who shall come again in glory.

Call to Worship:

Among the poor,
among the proud,
among the persecuted,
among the privileged,
Christ is coming,

With a gentle touch,
with an angry word,
with a clear conscience,
with burning love,
Christ is coming,

That the kingdom might come,
that the world might believe,
that the powerful might stumble,
that the humble might be raised,
Christ is coming,

Within us, without us,
among us, before us,
in this place, in every place,
for this time, for all time,
Christ is coming,
He is coming to make all things new.

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus, you are the head of your body, the Church.
Sometimes we can make it seem that church is all about us –
who we are, what we believe and do –
but in truth it's always about you, Jesus.
We come to give you honour and praise.
We come to bring ourselves into line with your example.
We come now to worship you. **Amen.**

During this time of worship we come to rejoice in the Word made Flesh. We come recalling the voice in the wilderness preparing the way of the Lord. We come to hear God's voice speaking to us. Open your ears, open your eyes, open your hearts, open your minds, and may God fill your souls with the living presence of Jesus Christ.

Hymn: StF 264 - [Make way, make way for Christ the King.](#)

1. Make way, make way, for Christ the King
in splendour arrives;
fling wide the gates and welcome him
into your lives.

*Make way (Make way), make way (make way),
for the King of kings (for the King of kings);
make way (make way), make way (make way),
and let his Kingdom in.*

2. He comes the broken hearts to heal,
the prisoners to free;
the deaf shall hear, the lame shall dance,
the blind shall see.
3. And those who mourn with heavy hearts,
who weep and sigh,
with laughter, joy and royal crown
he'll beautify.
4. We call you now to worship him
as Lord of all,
to have no gods before him,
their thrones must fall!

Graham Kendrick (b.1950)

Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 264

Prayers for the World:

God of hope,
you come to us as a child
and reveal to us the wisdom of the powerless.
teach us to walk more humbly with you.

Give us faith to watch for your coming.

We wait for you, O God.

God of hope,
though the poor are so often denied justice,
and the needy are without relief from their distress,
though we often have different priorities to those of your kingdom,
turn our hearts again to you and renew our trust.

Give us faith to watch for your coming.

We wait for you, O God.

God of hope,
though politics sometimes does not connect with our daily lives,
when leaders fail us,
prioritising the rich over the poor
and leaving inequalities unaddressed,

may we believe that a new world is possible.

Give us faith to watch for your coming.

We wait for you, O God.

God of hope,
though we live in such troubled times

when so many parts of the world are at war or in conflict,
the suffering of Ukraine continues as the weather gets harsher,
and no peaceful outcome seems close...

Give us faith to watch for your coming.

We wait for you, O God.

God of hope,
though life is a daily struggle for many,
choosing between heating and eating,
constantly worrying about debt and rising prices
and feeling overwhelmed by worry,
may we find rest in you.

Give us faith to watch for your coming.

We wait for you, O God.

God of hope,
though many are lonely and in distress,
persecuted or in danger,
some sick or far from home,
bring your healing to all who are in need today,
remembering in our own community...[add names]

Give us faith to watch for your coming.

We wait for you, O God.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer:

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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Reading: Matthew 3: 1-12 (NRSVA) The Proclamation of John the Baptist

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight."'

Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

'I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing-floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

Hymn: StF 673 - [Will you come and follow me](#)

1. Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you and you in me?
2. Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me?
3. Will you let the blinded see
if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free
and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean,
and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean
in you and you in me?

4. Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?
5. Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.

John L. Bell (b.1949) and Graham Maule (b.1958)
Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 673

A Reflection: It's not about me – but you Jesus!

Who are you? What do you stand for? What do you believe in? Where are you going? What is your visible or hidden agenda? It seems to me that everyone has an agenda these days, whether it's celebrities on popular shows such as I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here, Big Brother or The Traitors, or footballers, politicians and perhaps even ourselves. I'm sure you can think of a few people, who seem to have a hidden agenda at this present time.

You might argue that John the Baptist would have been the perfect contestant for I'm a Celebrity get me out of here! After all, he ate locusts for every meal (though I'm not sure the celebrities were allowed honey!) Often we get caught up in the odd appearance of John and in the false attention that seems to attract. But that's where the analogy stops. John is clear that this isn't about him – he is simply pointing to the one who comes after him, to Jesus, and as if to emphasise this, the Gospel of Matthew, tells us very little about who John the Baptist is. In this gospel, we hear nothing of his origins or family, we can only piece that together from the Gospel of Luke.

Even so, we do know that John worked as a baptiser, and that many people went flocking to hear him and to be baptised. He would have had a large audience, therefore, good viewer ratings (are the words I think we'd use today) among whom to spread his message. Many of the people hearing the Gospel of Matthew would have been Christians, and their baptism would have meant a lot to them, so introducing John as 'the' baptiser makes it clear that his ministry is important and should be noted.

We do know a little of his background; that John was a man from the wilderness. For the people of Israel this is a reminder of their roots. They had lived with God in the wilderness under Moses' leadership for 40 years, and when they crossed the Jordan they began a new way of life. In the same way that they began a new life at their baptism – a new beginning that John announces when he proclaims- “the kingdom of heaven is near – God is coming home to Jerusalem”.

We do know that the clothes he wore gave yet another clue to his role. Wearing clothes like that of Elijah, John links himself with Elijah and the role of a prophet. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible, Malachi foretold that God would send Elijah back before the day of the Lord – was John the new Elijah the people would have been asking themselves?

John had a rich identity and a powerful ministry, and even though his celebrity may not have been intentional, he certainly achieved celebrity status. So what does he do with his celebrity? He calls people

out, questions their motives, challenges their sincerity (about being baptised), and to cap it all he says in effect, that it's not about him and his baptism anyway – it's about someone far more powerful. “I might be a celebrity, but get me out of here,” he says ... go and follow him! Top of his agenda, he invites people to find a new way of life. Yet he knows that his role is limited. Despite criticism, he makes no false claims. He knows he is not the Messiah, and with real integrity he makes it clear that someone even more powerful is on the way. Despite the following he had built up for himself, he was not the least bit interested in that. John is all about Jesus. He simply wants to point to the one who was, who is and who is to come.

And who is it that John is pointing to? Psalm 72 reminds us, that Jesus will rule with righteousness, that the poor will be treated justly, that prosperity will be for all people, but prosperity here does not mean wealth. The underlying word here is 'shalom' meaning welfare or well-being. As he defends the cause of the poor, brings release to the needy and crushes their oppressors, Jesus will be one who seeks the well-being of all people. Key to

well-being is that believers support the well-being of the whole community. No one should judge others, but everyone should glorify God in harmony.

What of us today? Who are we? What do we stand for? What do we believe in? Where are we going? Who do we point to? What is our visible or hidden agenda? John's mission was to point people to Jesus, to 'prepare a way in the desert'. Do we do the same, do we point people to Jesus? Or are we more about us – our financial circumstances, our reducing congregations, our own personal faith? If we put ourselves in other peoples shoes – what do they see of Jesus when they look back at us? How might this reading challenge us to make this advent more about Jesus, than ourselves?

Prayer:

God of humility, we are sorry for times
when we behave as if life was all about us,
when we show off all we do and hide all that we neglect,
when we put others down instead of building them up,
when we dwell on what others have done wrong,
with hardly a thought to our mistakes.
Forgive us, we pray, and grant us the will to change,
and the courage to act after the example of John the Baptist
who lived out his calling with faithfulness and courage,
always pointing to your Son Jesus,
in whom he trusted –
and in whose name we pray.

God of humility,
you promise us healing when we turn away from the things that harm us;
you promise us a welcome when we leave behind the things that separate us from you;
you promise us forgiveness when we find the courage to name all we do wrong;
for you are full of love and long to see us whole,
God of hope,
Give us faith to watch and wait for your coming.
Amen.

Hymn: StF 707 - [Make me a channel of your peace](#)

1. 1 Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love;
where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;
and where there's doubt, true faith in you:

*Master, grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.*

2. Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope;
where there is darkness, only light;
and where there's sadness, ever joy:

Refrain

3. Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
in giving unto all that we receive,
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Sebastian Temple (1928–1997) from the Prayer of St Francis
Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 707

Blessing

Lord, lead us and help us to follow you.
Lord, lead us and help us to keep our eyes on you.
Lord, be at the centre of our lives, our thinking and our actions.
and show us how we can live,
so that our lives may serve you and point towards Jesus.

Amen.

Every blessing to you all.
Rev Sarah