

Sunday 5th July 2020 'My Yoke is Loving-Kindness' (from Rev Janet)

Day by day, three things I pray: to see you more clearly, to love you more dearly, to follow you more nearly – day by day.

Hymn 247 – I danced in the morning when the world was begun

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n1yzqsWxcBY>

I danced in the morning when the world was begun,
And I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun;
And I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth,
At Bethlehem I had my birth.

Prayers:

Creator of the heavens, your word is energy exploding
Flooding darkness with light, gathering chaos into harmony,
making waves and particles, atoms and enzymes.
You give life to all with joy and delight, pattern and purpose.
We are stunned to silence, in awe at your presence.
Remind us that our lives are made and moulded in your hands.
Why would we even try to walk away from you?
You command every star and every comet
and yet you call to us very gently to return to you.
Let us now humbly open ourselves to your presence and action.
Now – in our weakness, you walk alongside us in Jesus Christ and your Holy Spirit fuels a fire of love within us.
We are thankful. **Amen.**

Ask the children!

If you want to know more about God – learn from a child. When a child falls and grazes her knee, she doesn't rush for a medical research paper on wound care – she runs to the one who will tend the wound, provide a reassuring hug and dry her tears. When a child is hungry, he doesn't reach for the cookery book, but looks for the one who he relies on to provide his food. Jesus said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants'. As we read our gospel passage today – we hear a very familiar invitation: 'come to me, all you who are weary' but let's not misunderstand this as a promise of a life of ease and without hard work. Jesus says 'take my yoke upon you' 'learn from me' as a staggering invitation to walk alongside the one who loves us best – and gladly labour alongside him to shift the world on its axis – from revolving around human greed to revolving around the Creator's grace.

Gospel reading: Matthew 11: 16-19; 25-30

Hymn 322 – How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

God's good-glory revealed to children

I don't think Jesus had much patience for hierarchy. He was especially frustrated with the religious hierarchy who set themselves up as the 'experts' on God because 'they tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others' (Matthew 23:4). Jesus talks about entering the Kingdom as a little child (Matthew 18:3-4) and today's gospel tells us that it is not knowledge 'about God' or intelligence in theological arguments that bring us closer to God. In the Isle of Man we have a saying about preachers who parade their learning but can't communicate 'good news'. We say they are 'all degrees and no temperature'. Perhaps I could win Mastermind with the specialist subject 'what does the Bible say about God?' and yet never have had a personal encounter with God and may have no Christ-connectedness in my life.

Following Jesus – active participation

Jesus likens himself and John the Baptist to active, imaginative and energetic children – calling the elders to join with them in joyful dancing and sad lamenting. But the religious leaders look down on Jesus because his followers are fishermen and women

and children. They can't attack his teaching or deny his powerful works – so they choose personal attack by calling him a drunk. Their status as 'experts' is challenged by Jesus. Jesus then calls us to active participation as his disciples – and there is a joyful promise that a simple relationship with Jesus reveals to us all we need to know about God. We can laugh with Jesus, dance with Jesus, grieve with Jesus, suffer with Jesus and relax with Jesus – while those who consider themselves seriously religious may study books but experience nothing.

My yoke is loving-kindness

The final invitation of the gospel today is 'come to me'! This is how we grow in our intimacy with Jesus – we come and are yoked with him like two oxen pulling the plough. It is hard work that we are called to, but the great love we share makes any task we do together a genuine joy. We can be weary of struggling in our own strength. We can be overburdened with a personal quest for the false securities of status or wealth. We may feel overwhelmed by the demands the church puts on us – or feel insecure because we find reading the Bible difficult. Jesus says 'come to me' and walk close along-side me – and together we will share the yoke which is described as 'easy' but has a deeper meaning of 'loving-kindness'. Jesus gives utmost value and dignity to every person, especially the 'little ones' and we learn that egalitarian living is 'lighter' than hierarchical living. Being yoked this close to Jesus, we learn to live in-step with him, and find that putting love into action is the daily task which brings 'shalom' to the whole earth. **Amen.**

Song: Everlasting arms – by Lou Fellingham

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBLRnDSyO-Q>

He lavishes grace as our burdens grow greater
He sends us more strength as our labours increase
To added afflictions He offers more mercy
To multiplied trials He multiplies peace
When we have exhausted our store of endurance
When our strength has failed and the day is half done

When we've reached the end of our earthly resources
Our Father's full giving is only begun (x2)
So lean hard, lean hard, lean on the everlasting arms (x2)

Intercessions:

Thank you God that you know our needs. Breathe through our prayers and our lives, that we may ask and act according to your will for the wellbeing of all of creation.

We pray for the church as the Body of Christ – that Christians remain faithful and attentive whether together or apart.

May the life of Christ be revealed in us as we learn to walk in lovingkindness.

Strengthen we pray all who minister in Christ's name, give your wisdom and guidance as they lead your people in uncertain times.

In all our institutions, governments and communities, we pray for all people to be freed from the oppressions of greed, prejudice and injustice, and for all people to flourish in the fulfilling of their divine purpose.

Fill our homes with your peace and kindness – and motivate us with compassion for all who suffer. We remember those who have died and commend them into your everlasting arms. For we ask our prayers humbly, yet expectantly, in the powerful name of Jesus Christ. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn 503 - Love Divine all loves excelling

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6Or7mlolzg>

Blessing:

And now may the Creator bless us with creative energy
May the Saviour bless us with reconciled relationships
And may the Spirit bless us with overflowing love. **Amen.**

