**Worship Sheet for 6th June 2021: Bible Month**

Worship Sheet compiled by Barbara Spencer of Berkley Street Methodist Church

This is Bible Month, and, as you may be aware, we are looking at The Gospel of Mark

**Preparation for worship:** God is here with you. Be aware of His loving presence and of being part of His family. Let us worship Him, knowing that we are joining in with the prayers and praises around the world.

**Hymn:** StF 82: O, Lord, my God <https://youtu.be/tz3Ka_VHpVQ>

**Prayers:** Gracious and loving God we worship and glorify you. In awesome wonder we give you thanks and praise for all that you are and all that you have given to us… We marvel at the wonders of our world and that, although each of us is a tiny speck in time and space, we are important to you. We thank you for the Gospels where we read about Jesus who taught us how to live and love, and always had concern for everyone, no matter their background; that he had time to listen and care… We are sorry for the times when we have not followed his example, when prejudice has coloured our outlook and we have not understood situations… We ask your forgiveness and that we will *know* your forgiveness so that we may be the people you want us to be, fulfilled, enabled, and confident in you love. In the name of Jesus, our Saviour and teacher, we pray. Amen

**The Lord’s Prayer**

**Reading:** Mark 3: 20

**Hymn** StF 161: Speak, O Lord: <https://youtu.be/ubRlJj8xkds>

The Gospel of Mark is the earliest of the four Gospels. There is some discussion about the author, but many believe that it is Peter’s account which is recorded. Be that as it may, it is clearly the story of Jesus from a first-hand observation. After his baptism and spell in the wilderness Jesus begins his work in earnest. He heals many people, some dramatically, drives out an evil spirit, and calls his disciples/apostles. He becomes famous in the region, and it is easy to see why. Many diseases were incurable and had a major impact on the sufferers and their families. No wonder people flocked to see and hear him. Our story begins with the description of a crush in someone’s house. There were so many people that he and the disciples could not eat! On television there have been pictures of crowds in various public places with the sunny weather and some easing of lockdown. For those of you who have watched any professional golf competitions you will have seen the crowds following the golfers and massing round the greens – in spite of apparent social distancing. They wanted to see how the pros performed and catch any hints for playing better. So it must have been with Jesus. This miracle worker, who made so much sense with his teaching too, had to be seen and heard – or just touched! However, his family were worried when they heard the rumours implying that he must be insane. They had to assess the situation for themselves. They couldn’t get through the crowd and so sent a message, but his response was that his family also included “whoever does God’s will”. Not what was expected, nor understood fully at the time.

As all of this was going on, some Scribes had arrived from Jerusalem. They were not happy about Jesus’ popularity nor hearing the stories about him, his miracles and his teaching. They tried to undermine him, saying he must be possessed by Satan in order to perform such deeds. Jesus had the perfect answer. Satan cannot drive out Satan, only good can! He then went on to talk about forgiveness.

The Jews had formulae for the forgiveness of sins against God. The Scribes were masters. They knew the rules inside out and followed the rituals. What Jesus said then was a revelation and contrary to what they understood. “All the sins and blasphemies of man will be forgiven”. That is, all those who are truly sorry and want a good relationship with God. In the Torah, it states that anyone blaspheming against God will be stoned to death. Jesus said that this would no longer be the case. Only the people blaspheming against the Holy Spirit would not be forgiven. This is because they revile God and refuse to repent; they do not seek forgiveness. They distance themselves from him. We can never judge other people – only their deeds – but there have been abhorrent situations throughout history – you may think of some. Jesus made the reference to the Scribes because they refused to recognise his goodness as evidenced by his miracles and teaching. Their refusal put them in jeopardy unless they saw things differently.

It is easy for us to be judgmental about people and situations. In our current pandemic there are complaints about how things could have been done better. How much do we know about how decisions were made and why? How often have we made decisions that we have regretted later, perhaps with the magnification of hindsight or more knowledge! Sometimes actions are taken because we are unhappy about change or do not understand another way of thinking. The Scribes felt threatened by Jesus, even though what he was doing was good. He challenged them to rethink; to see things through the eyes of God, who is good. Does that sometimes happen to us? Do we spend time listening in order to understand a different perspective? Jesus related to people. He gave them time and understanding. He was inclusive.

Jesus’ family was important to him, and his brother James was one of the leaders after Jesus’ death, but Jesus stressed that we are all part of his family. We are accepted because of his death and resurrection. Consequently, we are charged with promoting good and abhorring evil, for our God is a God of love who cares for each and every one of us and demands that we love him and our neighbour too.

**Hymn:** StF 495:Dear Lord and Father of mankind**:** <https://youtu.be/WqOnjmr9Ah0>



**Prayers of intercession:** Wonderful and amazing God we know that you listen to us, as Jesus listened to the people in and around Galilee. We bring you our concerns as we pray:

For those who are subject to unfair prejudice and intolerance that stunts their lives…

For those who are, or feel, isolated and do not have a sense of belonging anywhere…

For those who feel rejected…

For those who are struggling mentally and/or physically, especially because of the consequences of the pandemic…

For those who live in fear because of abuse, homelessness, conflict, poverty, disease, disaster…

For those persecuted because of their Christian faith…

May they know your love surrounding and comforting them. We thank you that your love is evident in the people who are working to break down the barriers and making your world a better place for all.

We pray:

For your world. We hear so much about climate change and misuse of your creation. We ask that we shall be better stewards of your provision…

For scientists as they work to enable the better use of resources and find solutions to disease, depravation, and social problems… We thank you for their work with vaccines, especially against the Covid 19 virus…

For those working in the health and social welfare sectors who are struggling with increased workloads and demands…

For teachers, especially as they educate young people to have a better understanding of your world and the relationships between people.

For our church and families and that you will be at the centre, and that your goodness will be evident…

We ask these prayers in the name of Jesus. Amen.

**Hymn:** Before the throne of God above <https://youtu.be/EQ6QaZcPphM>

 or StF 503: Love Divine all love’s excelling: <https://youtu.be/_hmfqe_8SEI> (or both)

**Benediction:** “It is for freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm then…” and may the grace of the Lord Jesus Chris, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.