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**Printed material for Sunday 12th September 2021**

**Compiled by Pauline Zähner (Hilton Methodist Church)**

**Opening words**

Today, on 12th September, we celebrate Education Sunday and take as our text “like one being taught”.

**Hymn** : Singing the Faith 668 **Teach me my God and King** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHXilLgfVEU>

**Prayers of praise and confession**

God the Father, we praise you for your wisdom, understanding, compassion and patience.

God the Son, we praise you for your teaching and sacrifice, showing us how to live a life of love.

Holy Spirit, we praise you for your power, your encouragement and your counsel.

Forgive us when we fail in our discipleship to learn as swiftly from you as we should,

when we fail to grasp what you want us to learn and we fail to put into practice what you ask of us.

Lord, we are sorry for the times when we have not done what we could to support others in their discipleship, to enable them to grasp more of your love and to support them in their ministries.

Forgive us, Lord, and help us to know that those who are truly sorry can receive your forgiveness. Amen

**The Lord’s Prayer**

**Hymn** : Singing the Faith 477 : **Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMeAyiZ1niE>

**Reading** : Isaiah 50 verses 4-9a

**Comments**

In the Isaiah reading, the prophet has the ear of one being taught and the tongue of a teacher but his work puts him in danger. He dares to face up to his opponents because he knows that God will support him.

**Reading** : Mark 8 verses 27-38

**Reflection** (ii) **Like one being taught**

Last week I was watching Serengetii 2 on the TV. In it we see Aisha showing her cubs how best to live and patiently coping with the wayward behaviour of one of her cubs as they make their way across the landscape. Then we see Kali the lion looking for lost cubs as now his ground for the pride have been swamped by the rains and hippos now wallow where once his pride roamed. When he sees Aisha and her young. Aisha can outrun Kali, no question, but her cubs can’t. She thinks “outside of the box” and runs off in another direction and gets ahead of Kali. With her greater speed she is able to outwit Kali using surprise as a weapon. Her young learn an important lesson this day about life and survival. Kali ultimately gives up and pursues his search for the lost cubs whilst Aisha is able to continue her journey with her young.

Over the past year, those in education have had to do what Aisha did: think creatively, adopt new approaches and metaphorically “get ahead of the game”. During the lockdown, no longer did children study inside a classroom or even inside a school but had to use alternative and often electronic means of study and see their teacher online. Sadly, this learning wasn’t possible for all children and some have missed out of huge chunks of learning. Our education system is now called to find creative ways of catching these children up.

Aisha’s cubs gained skills for life by watching their mother at work. In and outside of the classroom, those who are taught often learn by watching someone more mature, someone with more experience or someone more skilled than they. In our education systems in UK we have provision in schools, colleges, training schemes and in apprenticeships for people to watch and learn. In churches we have ministers, local preachers and church leaders (stewards and pastoral leaders, youth leaders, Sunday School teachers and leaders, Messy Church leaders) who try to show a good example, try to model good Christian behaviour. We don’t all get it right all of the time but our teamwork and collegial approaches and our desire to be accountable help us advise and counsel one another and even to call to order those whose behaviour has fallen short. Jesus provided us with a model to follow when we are being taught and a model to follow when we teach.

Some examples are given in our reading from Mark. Here, we see the disciples being taught by Jesus. The disciples need to be alert and ready to learn, keen to seek answers, willing to explore meaning and able accept rebuke.

Jesus, greatest teacher of all teachers uses a range of different approaches to help his disciples learn. He starts by asking questions. Who do people say I am ? Who do you say I am ? Questions help guide learning and direct its focus. They can help the teacher and learner tease out details and clarify points, ensure understanding is complete.

The title Peter correctly chooses as an answer to Jesus’s second question has connotations for a warrior. The Jews often thought the Messiah would come to save them by military means. Jesus warns the disciples not to share that title with others. It would mislead them. Direct advice is helpful for not just for the learners themselves but for others who may in turn learn from them.

Instead of the term “Messiah”, Jesus chose to use the term “son of man” (arguably his favourite term and a helpful one). He explained the suffering, the rejection and the killing which he would undergo. This is direct explanation and you might think it was clear but Peter, in his rashness, turned to Jesus and challenged it whereupon Jesus was stern in his rebuke: “Get behind me Satan!” Sometimes, teachers have to stop learners when their challenge will lead not just the ones being taught but those around them into a false understanding.

When Jesus moves on to teach the crowds he uses yet another method. He explains by means of opposites and thus points the crowd and us to the nature of the kingdom which is counter cultural and not based on society’s values but on the values of love, love for God and for others. The use of opposites highlights what otherwise might be unclear.

Teachers in their work attempt to adapt their methods to best suit those taught but, students, too, have the responsibility to try to be as flexible as possible so that they can learn from a variety of approaches: questions, direct instruction, explanation, rebuke, the use of opposites to highlight and make clear. It is important that when we are not clear about what we are learning that we seek further.

This applies to learning a school subject like Maths or French but also applies to us in our discipleship development. When we are stuck as a Christian, the best way forward is to pray to God to help us gain access to what is difficult. The answer to our question may come directly from God or it may come indirectly through someone who teaches us, a Bible study leader, a church leader or a friend. It may come from doing further research, reading other translations of the Bible or study notes.

What we learn from Jesus, as we see him in action across the gospels, is that there are skills to learn and adopt as we, in turn, teach others. Jesus always works in love. He shows compassion and understanding even when others don’t, as in the story of Mary and the perfume. In his love, he can also rebuke and stop people following trains of thought which will mislead others and be unhelpful to them, as we have seen with Peter.

The challenge this week is for us all to adopt the right attitudes and approaches as we try to learn from Jesus and to take his model as a guide when we in turn pass on his love to others, be we in or outside of a classroom, inside or outside of a church. Amen

**Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession:** Today, on Education Sunday, we pray

* prayers of thanks for those who have guided and taught us during our life. [Why not name them ?]
* for a blessing on all whom we have supported through their time of learning and development. May they, in turn, share whatever they have grasped of you with those they meet.
* prayers of thanks for all that adults in education both inside and outside of schools have done to try to support school children through the periods of lockdown. We are grateful for their patient reassurance and sustained encouragement of those in theier charge.
* for happiness and safety for all children and learners and adults (headteachers, teachers, support staff, caretakers, catering staff, reception and secretarial staff) in schools and other educational establishments.
* for wisdom for all having to make decisions about education this year: our government and educational leaders in trusts, schools, colleges, universities and training programmes.
* for a successful and fruitful year of learning for all learners this Autumn.
* for healing for those known to us who are sick and suffering, recently bereaved or waiting for results or further treatment.

**Hymn** Singing the faith 504 **: May the mind of Christ my Saviour** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gE5fOXSymBc>

**Sending out prayer** (adapted from Roots)

God of salvation, you open the way to life by offering us unconditional love.
Teach us to be open to your teaching and ready to learn from you,

And guide us as we make an effort this week to share your teaching and love with others.
In Jesus’ name. **Amen.**