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**Worship Sheet for Sunday 8th November 2020 prepared by John Green of**

**Berkley Street Methodist Church, St Neots**

**An unprecedented or a re-defining moment!**

**A gathering prayer**

We come together in the presence of God who cares for us, who gives us a place of refuge. We come together knowing that we can find protection in the shadow of his wings. We come as the body of Christ,
gathered together in him, caring for one another and making space for each other to grow.
**Amen.**

**Hymn: 455 Singing the Faith - All my hope on God is founded https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2Hpq8APyns**

**Prayers:** **Thanksgiving** God, your wisdom draws us in. It is the bright sun in the morning, and the soft moon of night. Your wisdom is the dawn and the dusk, the kind opening and gentle closing. We praise you for all your wisdom gives: strength for continuation; hope for consolation; courage for perseverance; joy for the journey, and love for all time. **Amen**.

**Prayer of Confession** Forgive us, loving God, when we make decisions that rob others of choice; when we use resources that rob others of their share; when we use words that wound others; when we use names that belittle others. Forgive us, and grant us your peace, we pray. In Jesus’ name. **Amen**.

**Reading Mat Chpt 11 vs 20 – 24**

**2 Thessalonians Chpt 1 vs 1-4, 11-12**

**Acts Chpt 2 vs 42-47**

In many letters, mailings or correspondence currently sent out these days, regularly includes the word ‘unprecedented’.

Daily we are swamped with news of either the Corvid19 virus, earthquakes, fires, flooding, and wars on many fronts.

Yes, we may have experienced similar experiences in the past but because we live more globally now the impact is felt more rapidly and with greater impact.

Is it because of the way we have treated our world that we have contributed towards the situation? Perhaps all of what has gone on around us is a reminder that we are not in control of our destiny?

Quite understandably it has had a huge impact on us, physically mentally and emotionally; ever more so if we have loved ones who have contracted the virus, even lost loved ones without the opportunity to say goodbye. The Pandemic has created a complete upheaval in many areas of our lives. We find ourselves in ‘unprecedented times’.

All of which can have a negative impact upon us, where we can so easily fall into a negative mindset where we form our own individual bubble and miss all the good and positive things going on, perhaps it can even affect the way we interface with the world and those around us? Maybe even miss evidence of God’s wonder and love.

Our reading from Matthew describes the bubbles that various groups of people created.

The scribes and pharisees who were moaning like children about the fact that Jesus and John did not meet their expectations of the prophesized Messiah. They were so absorbed in keeping or skirting around the law as given by Moses that they were blind to the evidence around them that in healing the blind, the poor and hearing the good news being preached that they failed to see the messiah was right in front of them. But even then to recognize this they will have missed the point which is that Jesus first and foremost calls people to repentance; he performs miracles so that people can see he is the messiah and so repent.

Further on we read the people of Bethsaida and Capernaum by turning out to see Jesus may have thought this was all that was needed in accepting Jesus.

Was it a case of ‘misunderstanding or self-driven ideology’ - they had their own preconceived ideas of what the coming Messiah would be like?

Perhaps there is a cue for us; From our reading from Thessalonians we gain insights into the Thessalonian church who found themselves under extreme pressure and persecution but none the less held fast to their faith which is verified in the letter. Although this was the earliest Christian writing, from only 20 years after the crucifixion, names Jesus as Lord and God the Father, indicating as a fellowship they intimately belonged together.

They had clearly set their sights on Jesus even though in Thessalonica they were accused of disobeying the emperor by naming Jesus as their king. At that time there was a contemporary coin which had Julius Caesar’s head and ‘God’ on one side and ‘Augustus head’ and ‘of the Thessalonians’ on the other side. Their existence was not to Roman Patronage but to the grace and peace of “God our Father and the Lord Jesus”

St Paul also saw the value of ‘boosting one’s morale’ as he starts his letter by giving the congregation a word of thanks and encouragement by commending them for their faith, the love they have for one another, and their perseverance and faith in spite of persecution and enduring trials.

We all appreciate a word of encouragement and sometimes need a boost to our morale. In the current climate we need to support and encourage one another both on a practical level as well our prayers for one another.

As mentioned at the beginning of my message there are needs on many fronts where we can easily feel overwhelmed. God has created us in his likeness and image we are therefore custodians of his world. In various ways we have not lived up to expectations or not always been worthy stewards in our commitment to God’s world, or one another, but more importantly to Jesus and our Heavenly Father.

On occasions we too, have come with our misconceptions or lacked humility that we need to come to him seeking forgiveness and restoration. Remembering too, the words of St Paul “But forgetting what is behind and straining what is ahead I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus”. Reminding ourselves it is something we can only achieve in the power and strength of Jesus.

Today is Remembrance Sunday when we reflect on those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for freedom. Originally this commemoration was to honour those who had fallen in the First World War. Over time it has come to include all those who have lost their lives in armed conflict and, once again, this is happening today. This morning, we not only remember all the victims in both world wars, but we also think of those who have lost their lives in other conflicts today. So, what lessons have we learnt, if at all?

As Christians where is our hope? Where might we take our point of reference? As Christians we believe it is when celebrating the Lord’s supper, each time we do so we remember all that Jesus has done for us. Each time we celebrate the Lord’s supper it serves as a reminder of the sacrifice of Jesus laying down his life for us but being triumphant over death it also provides us with a sense of hope and renewal. No greater sacrifice can anyone make than lay down his life for another.

What form might our sacrificial giving take?

In Acts chpt 2 vs44 we find They held everything in common, ate together with glad and sincere hearts and were of one heart and mind.

This describes the early Church it also serves as a benchmark for us.

In the early church the breaking of bread and prayer and devoting themselves to fellowship which included generosity, participation, and partnership all hallmarks and outward signs of their faith. They also held everything in common. That doesn’t mean they sold everything and placed the proceeds in one point, rather selling in response to a need. This means that they could still hold onto say their homes but that they met to eat together either in each other’s house or in the temple courts. Therefore, they saw the Lord growing their community and bringing new believers in. With the restrictions of Corvid 9 imposed at the moment it may be difficult but as I mentioned in my opening title this can be a ‘Redefining moment’ where we are called to be innovative to think outside our box. How may we be more free-spirited? What can we share with others? **A meditation by David Watson which is a message of certain hope a kind of paraphrase from the Revelation. Chapter 21**

There’ll be no fear in heaven! “He who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them”.

That’s a picture of heaven where all our fears will vanish in God’s protecting presence. There’ll be no hunger or thirst. That’s a picture of complete satisfaction which none of us can ever fully know on earth. But when we see Jesus face to face… there will be no inner cravings or emptiness. There will be no more suffering: “The sun will not beat upon them nor any scorching heat.” There will be no depressions, neuroses, anxieties, pressures, tensions, tiredness or old age.

There will be no loneliness: “The Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their Shepherd: he will lead them to springs of living water”. There will be no more tears: “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes”. Every cause of sadness will disappear in God’s presence. We will be comforted beyond measure. Amen

 **Prayers of intercession**

We pray for those whose duty has led them to a battlefield where they have lost their life.
**God of the past, bless us with your peace**.
We pray for those dying right now in conflicts provoked by greed and power.
**God of today, bless us with your peace**.
We pray for those entrusted with the care of our environment and its fragile resources.
**God of tomorrow, bless us with your peace**.
We pray for one another that we may live selflessly and generously for the good of all.
**God of eternity, bless us with your peace. Amen**.

God of truth and justice, we pray for our world, a world in which corruption and deceit are all too easily seen, where misplaced ambition becomes idolatry, and where those in need are often disregarded or trampled underfoot.

God of truth and justice, we pray that your kingdom will be made known among us and through us; that your Spirit will cut through human greed, cruelty and lies, and point to a better way of living. God of truth and justice, we pray for those with influence – may those who advise be wise and not self-serving, may those who lead remember the lost and the least, and may those who proclaim your name do so with integrity and compassion. May Jesus be the way, the truth and the life in our world, in our community, in your church, in our lives. **Amen.**

**Hymn: from Singing The Faith – 81 – Now thank we all our God**

**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s99dNPKYtHk**

**Blessing** We have been gathered in by you, O God, the source of all wisdom and wonder. In your infinite kindness, you show goodness to all. May we, who have been nurtured by your consolation and welcome,
share consolation and welcome with all we meet, knowing that from you all goodness flows. **Amen**.