**Worship at Home Sheet: Sunday 7th November 2021**

**Compiled by Rev James Bamber**

As you engage in this act of worship take a few moments to be still and remember God is with you and others across the Circuit are sharing this act of worship with you.

**Call to Worship**: selected verses from Psalm 146

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!

I will praise the Lord as long as I live;  I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help…Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever;

**Hymn** (Sing/ Read /Pray /Proclaim the words)

STF 331: King of Kings, majesty OR

HP 14: Praise the Lord, his glories show

**Prayers of Adoration and Confession** (from ROOTS)

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one in three and three in one, we adore you –

for you are light in our darkness; you are the calm in our turmoil;

you are the wealth in our poverty; the meaning in our pointlessness;

the hope in our despondency; the meaning in our being.

For all of this and so much more,

we worship you.

**Amen.**

Lord Jesus Christ, we come to you in sorrow for our selfishness, in regret for our greed, in despair over our blindness and deafness to the needs of those around us. With penitent hearts we seek your forgiveness, and your blessing to make us more generous, more giving, more able to see, and more willing to listen. **Amen.**

**Assurance of forgiveness**

Our God of generosity forgives those who truly repent. Our God lifts the burdens from our hearts and the blindness from our eyes and sets us free to be the people we are called to be. **Amen.**

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**To wonder**

Look at the picture. What is God communicating with you through it? The image is titled, ‘giving hands’ – would you portray that idea differently? What does living generously involve for you?

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**Bible reading:** Mark 12: 38 – 44

**Reflection**

In many ways human nature has changed very little since Jesus delivered the words recorded for us in Mark 12. Jesus has been teaching and debating in the temple courts, declaring God’s judgment on what the Temple has become and on what God’s leaders have become. He accuses them of being more interested in their status, recognition and own agendas instead of God’s.

They parade around liking to be noticed in long robes which were worn as status symbols frequently with tassels which indicated they were people of God. They were people who weren’t paid for the duties they carried and so they relied on people’s hospitality something which some had grown accustomed to abusing. Widows were drawn into this system believing that somehow in the pecking order they would have an elevated position because they were caring for the ‘Great Ones’ as Rabbis were known.

Jesus riles against religiosity which has little impact beneath the surface, faith which operates only on the outside, which is switched on and off dependent on whose company one is in. The teachers of the law believed that in observing rules and regulations they were made right with God. Jesus invites us to think again. Uniform, title or office don’t make one important but character. Our Christianity has to go deeper than the surface and our actions need to match up with what we say. In contrast to the self-seeking leaders Jesus highlights the widow who comes probably into the Court of the Women and deposits all she has to live on in one of the trumpet shaped offering boxes.

This lady wasn’t just a widow but she was also poor. We don’t know what happened after this event. Did Jesus just let her go and then speak? Did He get Judas to give her something? Did she become a follower? Maybe it is appropriate for this living parable because she stands for all those who willingly, and selflessly offer their lives without fuss, or wordy speak but quietly in the background give their all.

Adrian Plass reflecting on this passage says in another context it could be labelled, ‘The sad man’s smile, the exhausted mother’s hug, the impatient man’s restraint.’ Regardless of the little we think have to offer if we give it generously it is enough and immeasurable in God’s eyes.

Take time to sit quietly and reflect on what faith means to you, how might we each live with more openhearted generosity and so reflect what God showers upon us freely?

**Hymn:** (Sing/ Read /Pray /Proclaim the words) STF 254/HP 138: Seek ye first the kingdom of God

**Prayers for Others** (from the Connexion’s Worship Sheet)

We pray for the church, for the world and for ourselves.

Lord, we pray for a strengthening of integrity, wisdom and faith for all Christian leaders; for resilience and courage for Christians who are persecuted, and for the fresh inspiration of the Holy Spirit to be poured out on all believers so that through their witness all the world will come to know the saving love of Jesus Christ.

Hear our prayers for national leaders, politicians and community leaders and all those who have any power or influence over the lives of others. May they act with compassion, justice and honesty, always putting the needs of the most vulnerable first.

Where there is conflict or war, we pray for the Holy Spirit to turn hard hearts towards peace and dialogue instead of violence. Hear our prayers for hope and restoration for the people of Afghanistan, Yemen, Lebanon and other areas around the world where there is economic breakdown, food poverty and lack of education provision.

We pray for comfort and courage for all who suffer injury, loss and hardship, for those who are displaced from their homes, and for those who are so desperate they risk their lives on dangerous journeys to reach safety. May God protect and guide them. We give thanks for aid workers who struggle in difficult situations to bring food, shelter and medicines to those in most need.

We ask for the healing touch of Jesus on the lives of people who are ill, in pain, anxious or trapped in addiction. We name in our hearts those known to us and to Jesus who are in need of our prayers and God’s love at this time. May they know the peace of mind and heart that only Jesus can give.

Loving God, thank you that you know us through and through, our hopes and dreams, our joys and sorrows. May we continue to know your loving acceptance and blessing in our lives, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**The Lord’s Prayer**

**Hymn:** (Sing/ Read /Pray /Proclaim the words)STF 465/HP 437: Guide me, O thou great Jehovah

**Blessing**

Generous God, make us generous. Make us generous in joy, and generous in love. Help us to remember what we have done today. Remind us, every day, that we need to share our love for you with others, that we need to give and live generously – for you are generous God, our God. Be with each one of us and all whom we love, this week and always. **Amen.**