

+ Crowe Hill + Fordingbridge + Horton Heath + Ringwood +

## Sunday Service 5<sup>th</sup> July 2020

### Welcome to this Sunday's Service

#### Lectionary Texts:

Zechariah 9:9–12 Psalm 145:8–14 Romans 7:15–25a Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30

Theme: 'Finding strength in our difficult days'

#### Keeping in Touch

It is with sadness that we share the news of the death of Eric Malberg's father in Finland. We hold the family and friends in our prayers, specially remembering all those prevented from travelling at this time.

Barbara Brownsea sends a message to friends in Fordingbridge that she is settling well in her care home, and looks forward to receiving visitors when it becomes possible.

#### Call to Worship

Almighty God,  
we gather in your name and bring ourselves before you:  
**your burden is light.**

When we are heavy of heart,  
and the pressures of life push us down,  
we bring ourselves before you:  
**your burden is light.**

When we are in need of rest,  
tired from the activities of the past week,  
we bring ourselves before you:  
**your burden is light.**

Jesus, gentle, humble Lord,  
we leave behind that which holds us back,  
and devote ourselves to celebrating the wonder of your love,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

## Hymn: Bless the Lord O my soul (SOF 5/2231)

[https://youtu.be/DXDGE\\_IRIOE](https://youtu.be/DXDGE_IRIOE)

### *Chorus*

*Bless the Lord, O my soul;*

*O my soul, worship His holy name.*

*Sing like never before, O my soul.*

*I'll worship Your holy name.*

1. The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning;  
It's time to sing Your song again.  
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me,  
Let me be singing when the evening comes.

2. You're rich in love and You're slow to anger,  
Your name is great and Your heart is kind.  
For all Your goodness, I will keep on singing;  
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find.

3. And on that day when my strength is failing,  
The end draws near and my time has come,  
Still my soul will sing Your praise unending;  
Ten thousand years and then forever more!

Words: Jonas Myrin & Matt Redman

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## Prayers

Wonderful God,  
life can get so heavy,  
so many worries to carry.  
Gentle Lord, **lighten us.**

Work and school can be hard:  
do we have enough time?  
Gentle Lord, **lighten us.**

So many things to buy,  
do we really need them all?  
Gentle Lord, **lighten us.**

So much pressure to look good,  
is anyone that perfect?  
Gentle Lord, **lighten us.**

So much food to eat,  
are we ever that hungry?  
Gentle Lord, **lighten us.**

Jesus,  
you carried the cross,  
yet you lighten us with joy and peace.  
Gentle Lord, **lighten us.**  
**Amen.**

## Hymn: I the Lord of sea and sky (STF 663, SOF 2/830)

<https://youtu.be/4t6mz8yoocY>

1. I, the Lord of sea and sky,  
I have heard my people cry.  
All who dwell in dark and sin  
my hand will save.  
I, who made the stars of night,  
I will make their darkness bright.  
Who will bear my light to them?  
Whom shall I send?

### *Chorus*

*Here I am, Lord.*

*Is it I, Lord?*

*I have heard you calling in the night.*

*I will go, Lord, if you lead me.*

*I will hold your people in my heart.*

2. I, the Lord of snow and rain,  
I have borne my people's pain;  
I have wept for love of them.  
They turn away.  
I will break their hearts of stone,  
give them hearts for love alone.  
I will speak my word to them.  
Whom shall I send?

3. I, the Lord of wind and flame,  
I will tend the poor and lame.

I will set a feast for them.  
My hand will save.  
Finest bread I will provide  
till their hearts are satisfied.  
I will give my life to them.  
Whom shall I send?

Words: Daniel L. Schutte (b. 1947)

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## Prayer for Illumination

As we turn to your Word, Lord through the inspiration of your Holy Spirit help us to hear you speaking to us today. Amen.

## Bible Reading: Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30 (ESV)

<sup>16</sup> “But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates,

<sup>17</sup> ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;  
we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’

<sup>18</sup> For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ <sup>19</sup> The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.”

<sup>25</sup> At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; <sup>26</sup> yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. <sup>27</sup> All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. <sup>28</sup> Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

## Bible Reading: Romans 7:15–25 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup> For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. <sup>16</sup> Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. <sup>17</sup> So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. <sup>19</sup> For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

<sup>21</sup> So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. <sup>22</sup> For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, <sup>23</sup> but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. <sup>24</sup> Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

## Sermon: 'Have you had a difficult time?'

### Introduction

Well, have you had a hard day? Or has it been a difficult lockdown? Or a troubled life? You sense that you need some rest, some relief, a bit of respite from your worries, burdens, responsibilities, cares? In such a situation the words of Jesus: 'Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' (Matthew 11:28) can seem like a beacon of hope in a troubled world.

### The Blame Game

There are often two all-too human responses to problems and stress in your life. They both involve blame. The first is to blame yourself. I'm a failure. I'm in the wrong job, or the wrong relationship. I can't succeed. I can't help myself, or stop myself. My problems must be my fault. Paul in our reading from the letter to the Romans (7:15-15) provides an excellent, and I am sure it is humorous, parody of the way in which we can blame ourselves for everything. But, Paul concludes, we don't have to think like this or live like this. Instead Paul ends with a celebration of the difference that the freedom that Jesus offers us can make.

The second avenue to take if you are going to play the blame game is not to blame yourself but to blame others. Everybody is in the wrong, except me! Jesus faced a similar attitude in his day and our gospel reading from the lectionary for this Sunday gives his answer. "To what can I compare you?" Jesus begins, and you know, whenever that phrase is used in the Bible the comparison is not going to be flattering! Jesus compares the people of his generation to children squabbling with each other. The parable of the children, according to interpreters familiar with Near Eastern customs, reflects gender roles. The round dance that occurred at weddings, accompanied by flutes, was performed by men, while mourning at funerals, often done by professionals, was women's work. Thus the parable may represent the girls reproaching the boys for being unwilling to play funerals, while the boys counter that the girls refuse to play weddings. From the perspective of each child, they think they are in the right. One child says I was willing to play weddings, I even got out the pipes and played, but it was you who wouldn't join in! Whilst another child equally self-righteously says, well I was willing to play funerals, I even started to sing the song, but you wouldn't wail and mourn. The children blame each other and think the other child is at fault for spoiling the fun. But what the adults see, with wisdom, looking in

on the situation, is that all the children are wrong because they have not learnt to play together.

And, of course in the context of the gospel, Jesus is not just commenting upon the children, he is using them as a parable to describe the attitude of the people of his day who will not follow John the Baptist for he is too severe for them, and who will not follow Jesus for he is too lax for them. The people will not follow anyone and are blind to wisdom and actions that are made available to them.

The blame game makes individuals of us all. We shy away from each other, and will not support and rely upon one another, for either, I blame myself – and I will not let you rely upon me; or I blame you – and so I will not trust myself to rely upon you.

### **Jesus reveals another way.**

Jesus says he comes to reveal another way. He comes with the wisdom that he has received from his heavenly Father.

Verse 25. In contrast to the people who are like noisy, quarrelling children at play in the streets, Jesus says that understanding comes to those who are like the tiniest of children, those who have not yet learnt how to squabble and fight and blame one another. We can learn how to see things differently and behave differently if we model ourselves, not on fighting street kids, but on receptive babies who only want a mother's love and comfort and milk. For Jesus has something important to share with us, if only we are humble and receptive enough to receive it. Not putting up barriers, not cutting others off, but welcoming and opening ourselves up in infant-like vulnerability.

What Jesus wants to reveal to us in his wisdom is the way of the yoke, the way of sharing. Jesus says that answer to all our weariness and problems and burdens is not to struggle with ourselves, or with one another, or with God, but to learn how to submissively share with others.

This is the answer that Jesus has for all who "are weary and are carrying heavy burdens". Not an answer of blame, but an answer of sharing. The word for "weary" generally means "to be engaged in hard work, implying difficulties and trouble." As a result of that hard work, one may be "tired or weary." It also takes on a non-physical, figurative meaning: "to become emotionally fatigued and discouraged," e.g., "to give up, to lose heart". The word for "burden" is also used as the word for a ship's cargo. Generally in the NT, they are used symbolically of the burden of keeping the law. Both words are used in Luke 11:46: And Jesus said, "Woe also to you lawyers! For you **load** people with **burdens** hard to bear, and you yourselves do not lift a finger to ease them." Matthew criticizes the scribes and Pharisees for the same reason in 23:4: "They tie up **heavy burdens**, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them." In other words, people are being taught to behave in ways which add to their burden in life and do not bring them relief.

Plenty of people with all sorts of burdens and problems in life have learned the hard way that the blame game is ultimately unproductive and that the way of sharing is the way to go. Alcoholics Anonymous, or drug addicts' self-help groups, or Weight-watchers, or people undertaking sports training and fitness regimes all realise that it is far easier to learn and to keep to your discipline if you do it together. Very few of us are capable of dealing with a challenging regime on our own, it doesn't matter if we are dealing with a personal problem, or if we have set ourselves a challenging new goal of self-improvement; we are more likely to fail, give up and feel inadequate about ourselves if we try to do it ourselves. But if we admit we need help and seek help, then we actually do better than those who try to do it alone.

The same is true for all who want to follow Jesus on his kingdom way. If we want to be his disciples we must be disciplined by him and through discipleship alongside each other.

So Jesus promises "rest" - something different. Jesus' rest is not doing nothing but means taking a yoke which may have allusions to Sirach 51:23-27 where we are to be **yoked** to wisdom.

Draw near to me, you who are uneducated,  
and lodge in the house of instruction.  
why do you say you are lacking in these things,  
and why do you endure such great thirst!  
I opened my mouth and said,  
Acquire wisdom for yourselves without money.  
Put your neck under her **yoke**  
and let your souls receive instruction;  
it is to be found close by.  
See with your own eyes that I have laboured but little  
and found for myself much serenity.

Jesus' yoke is described as "easy" This word does not mean "not strenuous," but means elsewhere in the Bible: 'better', 'useful', 'good', 'kind', 'pleasant'. Jesus may be saying that his yoke fits us well, it is suitable for our human condition and abilities. Perhaps like a couple "who are made for each other" being good and kind to each other is not a chore, but a natural and gracious response to the other. They don't have to blame each other or feel blamed by the other.

We are also to "learn" from Jesus as disciples. "Learn from me" means more than simply "listen to my teaching." As a designation for his disciples Jesus selected an Aramaic word that meant not "pupils" but "apprentices." From him they were to learn not merely to think but to do. They were to learn not only by listening but by watching and copying and joining in. The metaphor of the yoke attains a humble significance. The yoke is not one that Jesus imposes but one he already wears! We remember that commonly a yoke was a wooden instrument that yoked two oxen together and made of them a team. In this word Jesus may be saying: "Become my

yoke mate, and learn how to pull the load by working beside me and watching how I do it. The heavy labour will seem lighter when you learn to share the burden with me."

A church leader who regularly asked laypeople to accompany them on visits to potential members, to the sick, to the care facilities, to the hospital, etc. was challenged: 'What are we paying the pastor for?' Perhaps the answer is to consider when you pay a driving instructor to teach your child to drive a car. If the instructor were to do all the driving, the child won't learn. Learning from Jesus has to be more than just "head knowledge." It is being mentored into discipleship by other disciples.

Finally, Jesus describes himself as gentle and humble -- quite a contrast to the arrogant, privileged attitude of those who consider themselves "wise and intelligent." Do we really want a gentle, lowly, humble saviour and lord of our lives? Someone who is willing to lead and teach by sharing, someone who would never play the blame game? I hope you can say Yes to that.

The invitation to us all is to go forward as Christ's disciples and work out how to discover the rest that we are invited to share together. In yoke with one another is the right place to work together to discover the answers we need. Amen

And I am now going to invite you to share with me in a gentle prayer of confession.

## Prayer of Confession

Almighty God, when we do not understand why we do the things we do,  
forgive us.

In Christ there is freedom: **set us free.**

When we speak out of spite and not in love,  
forgive us.

In Christ there is freedom: **set us free.**

When we act out of anger and not in mercy,  
forgive us.

In Christ there is freedom: **set us free.**

When pride overcomes humility,  
forgive us.

In Christ there is freedom: **set us free.**

When jealousy is more important than generosity,  
forgive us.

In Christ there is freedom: **set us free.**

Lord, by your Spirit teach us when we do not understand why we have fallen short  
of your ideal.

Forgive us our sins and transform us by the perfect law of freedom,

in your Son our Saviour, Jesus Christ.  
**Amen.**

## Hymn:

<https://youtu.be/74kyfROS4q8>

1. I heard the voice of Jesus say:  
'Come unto Me and rest;  
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down  
Thy head upon My breast.'  
I came to Jesus as I was,  
Weary and worn and sad;  
I found in Him a resting place,  
And He has made me glad.

2. I heard the voice of Jesus say:  
'Behold I freely give  
The living water, thirsty one,  
Stoop down and drink and live.'  
I came to Jesus, and I drank  
Of that life-giving stream;  
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
And now I live in Him.

3. I heard the voice of Jesus say:  
'I am this dark world's light;  
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,  
And all thy day be bright.'  
I looked to Jesus, and I found  
In Him my Star, my Sun;  
And in that light of life I'll walk,  
Till travelling days are done.

Words: Horatius Bonar (1808–89)

## Taize Chant: In the Lord I'll be ever thankful

<https://youtu.be/uAx8giQrsOY>

In the Lord I'll be ever thankful,  
in the Lord I will rejoice!  
Look to God, do not be afraid;  
lift up your voices, the Lord is near;  
lift up your voices, the Lord is near.

Words: Jacques Berthier/Taizé

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# Prayers of Intercession

O Lord our God, accept the prayers of your people as we cry out to you; in your mercy, look with compassion upon us and all of your creation; for you are gracious, O lover of souls, giver of life, to you we give glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and for ever. **Amen**

Gracious God, the comfort of all who sorrow, the strength of all who suffer: Let the cry of those who grieve come to you, that they may find your mercy present with them in all their troubles; and give us, we pray, the strength to serve them for the sake of him who suffered for us, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Let us also pray

For a swift end to COVID-19. For those infected and those who have been exposed; **grant them strength, healing, and protection.**

For their loved ones and care givers; **grant them peace, comfort, and endurance.**

For those leading nations; **grant them sound minds, courage, and humility.**

For doctors, nurses, technicians, researchers, administrators, and all other healthcare employees around the world; **grant them strength by your life-giving Spirit, wisdom, and resources to do the work before them**

For keyworkers who must work, despite the threat of sickness; **grant them protection and continued provision.**

For those who have become unemployed or underemployed during this pandemic; **grant them comfort, wisdom, and financial provision.**

For churches and their leaders; **grant them discernment and creativity to lead and minister in unprecedented circumstances.**

For parents and families; **grant them wisdom, patience and joy.**

For children; **grant them protection from fear.**

For those for whom home is not a safe haven; **grant them refuge.**

For those who are alone; **grant them a sense of your nearness and love.**

For all making decisions during this time of uncertainty and fear; **grant them your peace.**

And for all the prayers we cannot voice because our language is insufficient or our ignorance too great; **Lord, hear our prayer. Amen.**

O God, your unfailing providence sustains the world we live in and the life we live; grant that we may never forget that our common life depends upon each other's toil; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we give you thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may praise you, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honour and glory throughout all ages. **Amen**

## Song: Be glorified (Forth in your name) SOF 5/2282

*A great hymn by Charles Wesley to send us on our way. Rewritten by Graham Kendrick. (Original words and familiar tunes here: R+S 521, STF 550, SOF 3/1237)*

<https://youtu.be/6nL18H0Md44>

1. Forth in Your name, O Lord, I go,  
My daily labour to pursue;  
You, only You, resolved to know  
In all I think or speak or do.  
In Your name I go, Lord.  
The task Your wisdom has assigned,  
Oh, let me cheerfully fulfil;  
In all my works Your presence find,  
And prove Your good and perfect will.  
In Your name I go.

### *Chorus*

*Be glorified in me,  
Be glorified in me.*

2. Preserve me from my calling's snare,  
And hide my simple heart above;  
Above the thorns of choking care,  
The gilded baits of worldly love.  
In Your name I go, Lord.  
You may I set at my right hand,  
Whose eyes my inmost being know,  
And labour on at Your command,  
And offer all my works to You.

In Your name I go.

3. Give me to bear Your burden light,  
And every moment watch and pray,  
And things eternal keep in sight,  
And hasten to Your glorious day.

In Your name I go, Lord.

For You delightfully employ  
Whatever bounteous grace has given;  
And run my course with steady joy,  
And closely walk with You to heaven.

In Your name, I go.

Words: Charles Wesley and Graham Kendrick

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## Dismissal and Blessing

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, "Peace I give to you; my own peace I leave with you." May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**