

**Tavistock Circuit Service at Home - 8th August 2021
- Becoming Mature Christians**

Prayer : Lord , help us to see ourselves as we are. Guide our eyes and ears as we seek to live for you. Forgive us when we fail, and in the words of your prayer lead us forward into truth. Amen

Lord's Prayer
Amen

Our thoughts today focus on the difficult question of becoming mature Christians. Unfortunately it has got nothing to do with getting old. Instead its main strength is associated with trickier virtues like wisdom, love, and fortitude. Much of the time we recognise that when we think we are getting wiser often suddenly realise our folly. In the lectionary lessons today there are examples to think about during worship and afterwards,

Hymn: Hymns and Psalms 150

O thou, whom once they flocked to hear
Thy words to hear, thy powers to feel;
suffer the sinners to draw near,
and graciously receive us still.

They that whole, thyself has said,
No need of a physician have;
But I am sick, and want thine aid,
And ask thine utmost power to save.

Thy power, and truth, and love divine,
The same from age to endure;
A word, a gracious word of thine,
The most inveterate plague to cure.

Helpless howe'er my spirit lies,
And long hath languished at the pool,
A word of thine shall make me rise,
Shall speak in a moment whole.

Make the my Lord's accepted hour:
Com: O My soul's Physician thou!
Display thy justifying thou!
Display thy soul's physician thou!

Display thy justifying power
And show me thy salvation now.

Charles Wesley - Hymn
based on John 5: 2-9

**Readings to read and Ponder 2nd Book of Samuel 2 Samuel 18:5-9,
15, 31- 33**

The king commanded Joab, Abishai and Ittai, "Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake." And all the troops heard the king giving orders concerning Absalom to each of the commanders.

David's army marched out of the city to fight Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim. There Israel's troops were routed by David's men, and the casualties that day were great—twenty thousand men. The battle spread out over the whole countryside, and the forest swallowed up more men that day than the sword.

Now Absalom happened to meet David's men. He was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom's hair got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair, while the mule he was riding kept on going.

Then the Cushite arrived and said, "My lord the king, hear the good news! The Lord has vindicated you today by delivering you from the hand of all who rose up against you."

The king asked the Cushite, "Is the young man Absalom safe?"
The Cushite replied, "May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up to harm you be like that young man."
The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!"[g]

Psalm 130 A song of ascents.

Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;
Lord, hear my voice.
Let your ears be attentive

to my cry for mercy.

If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?

But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.

I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning
more than watchmen wait for the morning.
Israel, put your hope in the Lord,
for with the Lord is unfailing love.

and with him is full redemption.
He himself will redeem Israel
from all their sins.

John 6 v

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."

Ephesians 4-25- 5.2

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism;

one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

This is why it[says:

“When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.” (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions[c]? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Instructions for Christian Living

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God.

Reflexion for Today: If you have been following the lectionary readings for the past few weeks you will notice that it traces the life story of the King of Israel, David. Its a chequered history from a quiet beginning where he is all but ignored before he is chosen from the life of a shepherd and unexpectedly selected to be prepared as a king and then crowned.

Initially it looks as though he can do little wrong and allowed to represent the army to successfully challenge Goliath the Philistine champion and, even more unlikely, he wins the contents. He becomes the Israeli wonder Boy. From being nonentity to sensation. But although he is famous he is also fallible, it will never last it never last, and sure enough David is sadly tested. He may be small but essentially he is a red blooded male and easily falls foul. of another man's wife particularly if she is significantly beautiful. Bathsheba was the wife of an army leader, and Uriah her husband was at high risk being in front of the soldiers going to battle. His virtue staying on guard increased his own risk of death. And this was deliberate. Slowly by slowly King David, as with his predecessors David finds that not only he, but other members of his family reap the effects of his schemes if not any benefits. Always wisdom and honesty and compassion are sad sacrifices.

In the passage from John's Gospel it is a picture of the feeding of the five thousand with a focus on its theological meaning. Jesus is speaking of the sufficiency of His sufficiency for all of us in providing our spiritual food. This only becomes apparent when we experience that reliance and accept Him. We all too readily have limitations on how far we trust. Perhaps the experience of Coved-19 may change that. We have our own plans in God's World until we will stop and seek His.

Prayer of Intercession

Lord Guide our thoughts and all times

Lead us in our Prayers this day to Your thoughts

Help us to listen with open hearts

Above us to teach to have open hearts of Love

Amen

The Grace