



The Central Norfolk Methodist Circuit

Sunday 15th March 2026 Mothering Sunday

Prepared by Aileen Fox Local Preacher



Call to worship: (using StF24)

Come, now is the time to worship.

Come, now is the time to give your heart

Come, just as you are to worship.

Come, just as you are before your God, come

Opening prayer:

Loving God, today as we think of qualities associated with caring, we thank you that we can join in worship wherever we may be; thank you for loving and caring for us and for all that we have received from you. **Amen**

Today can be a difficult Sunday for many, Mothering Sunday in the UK as we know it actually goes back to the 16th century and was the day when people returned to their mother church for a special service. Later domestic servants were given the day off to attend a service and to visit their families. Often, they would pick wildflowers on the way. So, the religious part has blended into a special day when flowers or gifts are given to mothers and others with caring responsibilities. This has become a big commercial event and for those who have never had children, those who have lost their mothers or are estranged and sadly some who have been abused, it is a sad day and they feel excluded. Our loving God loves us all and he cares for every one of us whether we are mothers or not. Let's just remember all who have cared, still care and show those loving qualities regardless of whether they are mothers themselves. Perhaps a neighbour, a friend someone who cared and showed us love regardless of status or title.

Opening hymn 80 Praise to the Lord, the almighty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= vegvb1u5s4>

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!

O my soul, praise him, for he is thy
health and salvation!

All ye who hear, brothers and sisters, draw
near, praise him in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy
work and defend thee; surely his goodness
and mercy here daily attend thee:
ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
who with his love doth befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord, who doth nourish thy life
and restore thee, fitting thee well for the tasks
that are ever before thee, then to thy need
like a mother doth speed, spreading the
wings of grace o'er thee.

Praise to the Lord, who, when darkness of
sin is abounding, who, when the godless do
triumph, all virtue confounding,
sheddeth his light, chaseth the horrors of
night, saints with his mercy surrounding.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with
praises before him!
Let the amen sound from his people again:
gladly for aye we adore him.

Joachim Neander (1650–1680)
translated by Catherine Winkworth (1827–1878) and Rupert E.
Davies (1909–1994)
Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition,
number 88

Words of encouragement from Ephesians 5: 8-14

For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light— for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, 'Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'

Prayers – Let us pray.

As we approach you loving God, we bring our prayers, our singing and our open hearts to you. Be with us as we spend time with you. In the stillness help us to realise we are not really alone because you are with us. You know us inside out, those times when we lack confidence and waver in our devotion to you. Those missed opportunities when we shy away from reaching out to others. Help us to realise that you share in our thoughts and our fears and love us.

We thank you for sending Jesus to share in daily life, in fellowship, discussion and events like weddings and funerals, meeting people and healing, and dying on the cross for each one of us.

Loving God, we seek your guidance for our journey, as we seek to navigate what can sometimes feel a difficult time; help us to offer the good news of Jesus to all whom we journey alongside. **Amen**

The Lord's prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

Hymn 736 In Heavenly love abiding <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sT0r9DaGbmQ>

In heavenly love abiding,
no change my heart shall fear;
and safe is such confiding,
for nothing changes here:
the storm may roar without me,
my heart may low be laid;
but God is round about me,
and can I be dismayed?

Green pastures are before me,
which yet I have not seen;
bright skies will soon be o'er me,
where darkest clouds have been;
my hope I cannot measure,
my path to life is free;
my Saviour has my treasure,
and he will walk with me.

Wherever he may guide me,
no want shall turn me back;
my Shepherd is beside me,
and nothing can I lack:
his wisdom ever waketh,
his sight is never dim;
he knows the way he taketh,
and I will walk with him.

Readings: Psalm 23, The Lord's my shepherd

Old Testament 1 Samuel 16: 1-13 Samuel Anoints David,

Reflection 1

King Saul has not obeyed God's instructions to destroy the spoils of war after defeating the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15). So, the prophet Samuel is sent by God to anoint a successor from one of the sons of Jesse the Bethlehemite. His arrival alarms the leaders of Bethlehem but Samuel reassures them by organising a sacrifice and inviting Jesse and his sons. Samuel thinks in terms of conventional attributes like height and appearance. But God wants the one whose heart is right. As each son passes before Samuel he sees their appearance and asks is this the one and each time the answer is no. Eventually Samuel asks Jesse if there are any more sons and the reply is David the youngest who is minding the sheep. He is sent for and is anointed by Samuel.

Sometimes we are attracted to someone purely by appearance and think they are the person we need, to be a friend or to be the one to undertake a task. However this can sometimes be the wrong choice, we really need to get to know someone better, to understand them as to whether they are the right person. When we interview someone for a job we ask questions concerning their ability, interest and so on before making a decision. We shouldn't choose solely because of their appearance or demeanour; sometimes the more hesitant person is the one who will be the most suitable rather than the very confident one. Nowadays most roles have a probationary period of time, so that the employer and the employee can see if all this will work out. At the end of this time either party can part company if it has not been a suitable matching. God, unlike humans knows who he needs and often chooses what seems to us the most unlikely person for the role he wants them for, we might be looking for very different attributes. God wanted David and if we read on David didn't always get things right but he was God's choice and he did serve him to fulfil the tasks required.

Hymn 480 The Lord's my Shepherd <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3hNZT6ddJg>

The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want;
he makes me down to lie
in pastures green; he leadeth me
the quiet waters by.

My soul he doth restore again,
and me to walk doth make
within the paths of righteousness,
e'en for his own name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through death's dark
vale, yet will I fear no ill;
for thou art with me, and thy rod
and staff me comfort still.

My table thou hast furnishèd
in presence of my foes;
my head thou dost with oil anoint,
and my cup overflows.

Goodness and mercy all my life
shall surely follow me,
and in God's house for evermore
my dwelling-place shall be.

*Psalm 23 The Scottish Psalter, 1929 Reproduced from Singing the
Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 480*

A Prayer for all the gifts we have been given. (offertory prayer)

As we share in offering gifts of time and money to you, we ask for your blessing that these can be used in many ways to show your love to others. This we ask in the name of Jesus. Amen

Gospel reading John 9:1-41 A Man Born Blind Receives Sight

Reflection

I thankfully have good sight made better by spectacles for close work. There was a time when I struggled driving at sunset and in the dark. The problem was cataracts and I was told they were not ready to be removed. I actually had to restrict night time driving and it was difficult for a while. On one occasion I frightened my passenger as the sun was low and I struggled to see where I was driving. I was blinded by the sun! Fortunately, a compassionate optician and surgeon saw the need for me living alone, to be able to drive and the two operations were duly and successfully carried out.

The man born blind was healed by Jesus. But first the disciples had asked lots of questions. Why was the man blind was it because of sin, or something his parents had done? Jesus is more interested in practicalities. How can God's glory be revealed in this person? The description of this encounter shows complete trust by the man in this person he cannot see. Jesus takes mud and using his own saliva makes a paste and puts a mud mask over the man's eyes. The man obeys the instruction to wash the mud from his eyes and he can see for the first time, Jesus then disappears. News of this healing spreads and doubt is shared that the man was actually born blind, or if it is even the same man who was blind! The healed man is then taken before the Pharisees who ask lots of questions. No one appears thankful or excited that someone born blind can see. His parents are sent for and they agree it is their son, yes he was unable to see from birth but they do not know how he received his sight. They are afraid of the leaders and tell them to ask the man himself as he is an adult. The man replies; "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, go to Siloam and wash. I went and washed and received my sight." The man is questioned even more and his reply "If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." This angers the leaders and they call him a sinner and throw him out of the area. Jesus hears this and goes and seeks the man who he then asks 'do you believe in the Son of Man?' The healed man answers with 'who is he' and 'tell me that I may believe in him'. Jesus responds by telling the man that it is him and the healed man replies with 'Lord I believe' and he worships Jesus.

Sadly despite the wonderful gift of sight to the blind man the Pharisees refused to accept this because they didn't know who Jesus was, they were caught up in legalities such as the place where the healing took place and all the rules and regulations they followed. We too can be guilty of spiritual blindness as we sometimes fail to see what God has done in our own lives and in others; how God still continues to heal, as well as guide and love us. We must trust and obey and have faith in God. We sadly do not always see the truth or the hope, we get preoccupied caught up in our own little world, our faith struggling with these wonders from God.

John Newton the writer of our closing hymn was a slave trader who had a terrifying experience in a storm. He prayed to God for mercy and when he survived he became a Christian, and eventually a priest and gave up the slave trade. He recognised his sins and realised God's mercy. Are we willing to trust in God to recognise our faults and have a new beginning to live with hope and love through Jesus? God loves us in the everyday, the high and low spots, he is always there.

Prayers of intercession- Let us pray.

We pray for the world and all the situations escalating through war, flood, natural disasters. Our hearts go out to refugees, people displaced from their homes, all who are struggling with finances, homelessness and situations that seem never ending. For those who are unemployed, dealing with mental health issues; all with caring responsibilities and people who are lonely, sick, coming to the end of their earthly lives and those who are bereaved. A thought too

for those who have survived abuse may they find hope and comfort. We bring to you all in need, that they may know your loving arms your care and that they will learn to trust in you and have hope. In Jesus name. **Amen**

Hymn 440 Amazing Grace <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zG3wOkWyYAA>

Amazing grace — how sweet the sound
—that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

God's grace has taught my heart to fear,
his grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
God's grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

Closing prayer.

May you know the blessing
of God the Father, God the Son and God the
Holy Spirit. **Amen**

And, when this heart and flesh shall fail
and mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil
a life of joy and peace.

When we've been there ten thousand years
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we first begun.

*John Newton (1725–1807) (alt.)
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