

Church at home

East Leake Methodist Church 2020

Sit comfortably in a quiet place and prepare, start with a brief period of silence, turning your mind and spirit towards God. You may want to have a cross or candle in view as a focus.

Reading

Psalm 139:1-18

StF 427: I'm accepted, I'm forgiven

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmJSEhn7DtU>

Let us pray
Sovereign God,
Creator of the heavens and the earth,
ruler over space and time,
we praise you that we can respond to you as a father;
that we can approach you,
not in a spirit of subservience or fear,
but as your children,
assured of your love and secure in your purpose.
Father of all,
we worship you.

We praise you that you care for us as much as any father cares for his child and far more besides -
your hand always there to guide and discipline,
to provide and protect,
to comfort and encourage,
to nurture and cherish.
Father of all,
we worship you.

We praise you that your love is inexhaustible -
that, however often we fail you,

however many times we may stray from your side,
you seek us out,
striving to restore the relationships we have broken,
always ready to forgive and forget.

Father of all,
we worship you.

We praise you that we are made in your image,
capable of understanding good and evil,
able to appreciate treasure in heaven
as well as the many riches of this world,
and able also to respond to your love in Christ
and so inherit your kingdom

Father of all,
we worship you.

Sovereign God,
we come to you on this Father's Day,
giving thanks for everything that fathers mean to us,
but rejoicing, above all, in your fatherly care for all.
With grateful hearts, we bring our praise
and commit ourselves again to your service.

Father of all,
we worship you.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen

Lords Prayer (whichever version you prefer)

Reading

Luke 15:11-32

Meditation of a lapsed Christian returned to faith

Lost and found!

It wasn't the first parable he'd told on that theme,
but to me it was the best,

those words of his, when I heard them read,
falling like music on my ears,
for though the message was much the same as before,
the implications were so very different.
I was just like that young man, you see,
the second of two sons,
not simply lost but having gone wilfully astray,
I'd known and understood the Father's love,
what it was to be part of his family,
and I'd gone and frittered it all away,
preferring my way to his,
squandering the riches he'd given me,
living with no thought of his will or guidance.
It was my own doing, no one else's.
I'd plumbed the depths of despair,
sunk until I could sink no lower,
and it was all down to me,
a self-made humiliation.
That's what frightened me the most:
to be lost is one thing -
anyone can make a mistake -
but to be the knowing instrument of your own destruction,
to recognise the error of your ways and carry on regardless,
can God forgive that?
I thought he'd washed his hands of me,
that if I dared approach him he'd shake his head
and tell me, 'I told you so',
so I kept my distance and lived with my shame as best as I could.
Only, suddenly, here was Jesus speaking not just of forgiveness
but joyful acceptance,
a love reaching out to meet me,
celebrating my return,
welcoming me home,
and it dawned on me that the mercy of God
is greater than I'd ever begun to contemplate.
I'd walked away.
Thrown his gifts back into his face,
and I'd assumed there could be no return.
But I was wrong,

for he was there waiting,
longing to receive me back,
arms outstretched to hold me close.
I was lost,
and now I'm found!

Reading

Romans 8:12-17

StF 519: Father I place into your hands

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2YMYyCXc_g

Address

What did you call your father? Over the years I've heard so many terms used including Dad, Daddy, Pa, Papa, Pops, Da, Pad (Welsh in case you're wondering) What about how we address God? Jesus addresses God as Father (Abba) just look at the Lords Prayer. Some scholars say he used that particular approach because he was living very much in a patriarchal society. The argument is then used in some quarters that if he was here today might he call God mother?, especially amongst those who live very much in a matriarchal society. Today we appear to live in a multi-gender society and many still struggle to find a way of addressing God that will not cause offence. Where do we draw the line? I must admit that in one of the many translations/paraphrases of scripture, in the Psalms God is addressed as O Lord our Governor. Many biblical scholars insist that God is strictly gender neutral yet many of us still rely on Jesus' picture of God as Father.

I realise that many people have problems with the Father imagery because of their own history, of abandonment issues, violence, indifference, etc. They then transfer these problems onto God because of the association with "father". Yet when Jesus speaks of God as Father he is making use of the more positive aspects of fatherhood.

Most fathers aim to be the best that they can be, those who have had kind, attentive, loving fathers vow they will be like that with their children, Many of those who grew up with vacant or violent fathers have the aim that they will be better fathers for their children so that their children won't grow up with the same backgrounds they experienced. There will always be those who are not nor ever will be willing to be

fathers, too often too full of their own wants and needs to properly care for dependant children. Also, over the years, I have met men who would have been excellent fathers, yet circumstances haven't presented themselves. One particular gentleman I met was a URC Minister who had a congenital eye problem which meant over the years his eyesight gradually got worse. Both he and his wife (also a URC Minister) agreed they could not inflict the condition on any child, so they had no children and the condition concluded with him. He was a loving, caring man who had so much to give to other people's children, I would have been proud to have him as a father.

Despite our understanding of fatherhood, wherever we have come from – the Fatherhood of God stands head and shoulders above. He is the giver of all that is positive – in fact when He meets Moses via the Burning Bush He points out that Moses should say “I am” sent him. Thinking of that in particular we can add everything we consider as truly positive and apply them to Him. “I am – loving, caring, Peace, happiness, supportive, etc”. Ultimately we can take on board “I am Life” – He is the One who not only creates Life with a capital L but gives it to us through Jesus. Thank you Father God for all that is needful.

Intercessions

Father God,
we pray today for those entrusted with the responsibility of fatherhood,
all who have the duty and privilege of raising children,
fashioning their lives,
offering a stable and loving environment in which they can grow,
leading them along the exciting yet demanding path to adulthood.
Grant them love, insight and devotion.
Father of all,
hear our prayer

We pray for fathers whose marriages or relationship with their partner has broken down,
separated from their children or seeing them only occasionally,
many having responsibilities for another family,
and we pray also for stepfathers
who will fill the role that once was theirs.
Grant them commitment, dedication and sensitivity.
Father of all,
hear our prayer

We pray for fathers with no sense of responsibility,
failing to make time for their children,
careless in offering support and guidance,
casual in providing discipline,
abdicated their role as parents.
Grant them forgiveness,
repentance and the opportunity to make amends.
Father of all,
hear our prayer

We pray for children of broken homes,
deprived of a father figure
or knowing first one, then another,
rarely able to establish a meaningful and lasting relationship.
Grant them stability, support and the knowledge that they are still loved.
Father of all,
hear our prayer

We pray for children abused by their fathers,
emotionally scarred for life,
struggling to come to terms with their experience,
haunted by an image of fear rather than love.
Grant them healing, peace and courage to face the future.
Father of all,
hear our prayer

Finally we pray for those who have lost their fathers,
whether as children or as adults
for some their father little more than a name,
for others a heart-wrenching memory,
but each carrying a sense of loss.
Grant your strength, your comfort and your hope.
Father of all,
hear our prayer

Father God,
we lift before you today fathers and their children.
Enfold them in your love,

and surround them with your fatherly care,
today and every day
Father of all,
hear our prayer
Through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen

StF 238: Lead us heavenly Father
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JAve_-XMoMY

Concluding prayer

To God who is higher than our highest thoughts,
yet closer than our closest friend,
be thanks and praise,
glory and honour,
this day and for evermore.
Amen