

Church at Home

East Leake Methodist Church 12 September 2021

Education Sunday - A Word in Season

Led by Rev Michael Heaney

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.

Call to Worship

Out in the open wisdom calls out.
She raises her voice in a public place.
On top of the city wall she cries out.
Here is what she says near the gate of the city.

Pay attention to my warning!

Then I will pour out my thoughts to you.

I will make known to you my teachings. *From Proverbs 1*

Hymn StF 137 New every morning is the love

New every morning is the love
Our wakening and uprising prove;
Through sleep and darkness safely brought,
Restored to life, and power, and thought.

New mercies, each returning day,
Hover around us while we pray;
New perils past, new sins forgiven,
New thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven.

If on our daily course our mind,
Be set to hallow all we find,
New treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.

Old friends, old scenes, will lovelier be,
As more of heaven in each we see;
Some softening gleam of love and prayer
Shall dawn on every cross and care.

The trivial round, the common task,
Will furnish all we ought to ask:

Room to deny ourselves; a road
To bring us daily nearer God.

Prepare us, Lord, in your dear love,
For perfect rest with you above;
And help us, this and every day,
To live more nearly as we pray.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPZn-4ZyGJI>

Opening Prayers and the Lord's Prayer

LORD GOD, WE COME BEFORE YOU IN WORSHIP,
Intending to give you all that belongs to you:
Our hearts, our souls, our minds, our all.

Help us to grow in faith, regenerated by your Word.
Help us to grow in hope, refreshed by worshipping together.
Help us to grow in love, renewed by the Holy Spirit.

In the name of Christ, we offer our worship to you,
God our Creator, Redeemer and Friend.

We share together in 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.

OT Reading Isaiah 50: 4-9a

“The Lord God has given Me
The tongue of the learned,
That I should know how to speak
A word in season to him who is weary.
He awakens Me morning by morning,
He awakens My ear
To hear as the learned.
5 The Lord God has opened My ear;
And I was not rebellious,
Nor did I turn away.
6 I gave My back to those who struck Me,
And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard;

I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.

7 “For the Lord God will help Me;

Therefore, I will not be disgraced;

Therefore, I have set My face like a flint,

And I know that I will not be ashamed.

8 He is near who justifies Me;

Who will contend with Me?

Let us stand together.

Who is My adversary?

Let him come near Me.

9 Surely the Lord God will help Me;

Who is he who will condemn Me?

Hymn StF 338 There is a Redeemer

There is a Redeemer,
Jesus, God’s own Son,
precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
Holy One.

*Thank you, O my Father,
for giving us your Son,
and leaving your Spirit—
till the work on earth is done.*

Jesus my Redeemer,
name above all names,
precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
O for sinners slain.

When I stand in glory
I will see His face.
and there I’ll serve my King for ever
in that holy place.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OdDhy-p8xNM>

Prayers for ourselves and Community

A time of sharing and reflection to pray for our village and wider community. This also is an opportunity to pray for ourselves and those closest to us.

Being Education Sunday let us specifically remember the schools in our village.

Leader - Be still and know that I am God

Response - Be still and know

NT Readings Mark 8: 27-30; James 3: 1-12

Mark 8

27 Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, “Who do people say I am?”

28 They replied, “Some say John the Baptist. Others say Elijah. Still others say one of the prophets.”

29 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.”

30 Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

James 3

My brothers and sisters, most of you shouldn't become teachers. That's because you know that those of us who teach will be held more accountable. 2 All of us get tripped up in many ways. Suppose someone is never wrong in what they say. Then they are perfect. They are able to keep their whole body under control.

3 We put a small piece of metal in the mouth of a horse to make it obey us. We can control the whole animal with it. 4 And how about ships? They are very big. They are driven along by strong winds. But they are steered by a very small rudder. It makes them go where the captain wants to go. 5 In the same way, the tongue is a small part of a person's body. But it talks big. Think about how a small spark can set a big forest on fire. 6 The tongue is also a fire. The tongue is the most evil part of the body. It makes the whole body impure. It sets a person's whole way of life on fire. And the tongue itself is set on fire by hell.

7 People have tamed all kinds of wild animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures. And they still tame them. 8 But no one can tame the tongue. It is an evil thing that never rests. It is full of deadly poison.

9 With our tongues we praise our Lord and Father. With our tongues we curse people. We do it even though people have been created to be like God. 10 Praise and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, it shouldn't be this way. 11 Can fresh water and salt water flow out of the same spring? 12 My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree produce olives? Can a grapevine produce figs? Of course not. And a saltwater spring can't produce fresh water either.

Address “A Word in Season”

What season are we in just now would you say? Not easy is it sometimes to discern what season we are in in the UK. Not all that common to experience all four seasons in one day? Then again with climatic changes patterns and weather are increasingly difficult to predict. Many of us will rely on a weather app on our phone for seeing what the day or the week holds - I'm not convinced it is any more than someone somewhere in this area every 15 minutes looking out their window and updating the information for us there and then!! So that's OK for now - but not that helpful for next week, or a couple of weeks' time.

But we use the term season far more than any divisions of the year marked by particular weather patterns and daylight hours, resulting from the earth's changing position with regard to the sun.

But we use the reference of seasons to more than that, indeed to any period of time which we define for a particular purpose. Just like a new Football season.

So perhaps we might begin today by thinking about what season are we in?

What season in our life? - age, health, family, work?

What season in our church? - covid, post covid, growing, declining, consolidating, seeking, reawakening?

What season in our faith? - so for now if Jesus asked you/asked me who do you say I am - what's our answer in this current season. It may well be very different to some other time in our life.

So what might be the significance of a word in season be for us, as well as those involved day to day in education.

The theme for Education Sunday this year is 'A word in season', taken from Isaiah 50:4. 'The Lord and King has taught me what to say.'

We find these words in the midst of the Servant Songs where Isaiah was writing prophetically about the ministry of the coming Messiah, explaining that the One who was to come would be an anointed teacher, who would be able to speak "a word in season", the right word at the right time, to the weary.

But Isaiah 50:4 is a particularly interesting verse as it speaks of being awakened to hear as well as being equipped to teach. After the challenges of the last eighteen months, it is clear that those who teach are as much in need of a refreshing word as those who learn from them. This is what makes Education Sunday this year so important. There are education issues all around us that cannot be ignored, from both the perspective of the teacher and the student.

So, this last period of time for those in Education must have been the most tasking of all. My daughter who teaches at a Pupil Referral Unit in Liverpool for secondary children excluded from mainstream learning has had the additional challenges of Covid over and above the usual ones in this area of education.

As James wrote 'My brothers and sisters, most of you shouldn't become teachers. That's because you know that those of us who teach will be held more accountable'. I have an admiration for teachers therefore at every stage of life, from nursery to University.

In focussing on 'a word in season' we need to acknowledge the weariness that must surely have affected the whole education sector as it has coped with the disruption of Covid, and seemingly a government and minister who have been left wanting on many occasions, but we also need to keep in mind the strength that will enable us to open up the possibilities that lie ahead. From a Christian perspective there always has to be an added dimension, a dynamic that we wish for others, and we seek to live out ourselves. So, whether we consider ourselves in education or not today is for all of us.

A word in season at a time such as this must bring encouragement and hope as well as understanding and support, to student, teacher all alike. It cannot be a trite word. The world is already too full of empty and undermining words as, sadly, it is often the negative ones that spread. Now is the time for us to be bold; to speak out clearly and to seek God positively.

Education Sunday provides a great opportunity to give thanks to God for all who teach and all who study, for all who continually have to find the right words and deliver them with enthusiasm and graciousness, for all who have to build constructively on all that has been learnt before while constantly opening up new horizons. Education and learning are a lifelong experience for all seasons, and as people of faith I suggest it is just as important for us, living to learn, and learning to live as Christ's followers in this current season.

What might a word in season mean for us and our church is a nice link into the upcoming sessions that Angela has organised for us entitled 'Sharing the Good News' over four sessions to be led by Rev Martin Swan during October and November. As the poster says 'Open to all who need practice in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ' - might we at the end of that be able to answer Jesus as to who do we say he is?

Another example of encouragement on this education Sunday for us in our church has been our Tuesday chats - in many ways some of the best formats of learning as we share with and from each other, just how the message from Sunday has made us think, or otherwise.

Perhaps Tuesday after a little time to reflect ourselves for those available we might be able to share - how much are we still up for learning; for sharing; for discovering today's inspiration from God to our current world.

Teaching and studying are demanding and privileged callings. We can take heart from the One of whom Isaiah wrote and of whom the Gospels speak. Here we find ample evidence that the right word delivered in the right way at the right time can change lives.

The fact that the Church knows this through experience positions us well, but just because we come to church is perhaps not enough?

The world in general and the education sector in particular need a word in season. Let us see what might be possible for each of us to play a part in bringing such a word.

Hymn StF 248 I heard the voice of Jesus say

I heard the voice of Jesus say:
'Come unto me and rest;
lay down, O weary one, lay down
your 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.

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.

I heard the voice of Jesus say:

'I am this dark world's Light;
look unto me, your morn shall rise,
and all your 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.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKP3fdKIXOQ>

Prayers of Intercession

Response: Lord from our lips and our hearts

All: Please hear our prayers

We pray for our church here in East Leake. We give thanks that we are a church with a mission and with a welcome for those in need around us. Help us to serve people without judgement and meet their needs. We honour you with a simple open ministry for all who are welcome in this building. We pray for our church congregation and each one who plays a vital part in the ministry and mission here. Strengthen the ministry that is in us all and we pray in anticipation of Sandra coming among us. May we all recognise and acknowledge the gifts you give and step out in faith as you call.

Response: Lord from our lips and our hearts

All: Please hear our prayers

We pray for your troubled world. We are concerned for the tragedy of war, pandemic and climate change; for the terrorism in Afghanistan and for those left behind. We give thanks that it is not us in that place. We pray for those affected by Covid and give thanks it is not us who are suffering; for the changes to our climate and give thanks we are not too badly affected here. Instead, we give thanks that we are chosen to pray for these matters and not to experience them. Lord, we are earnest in prayer, make us earnest in action to help the world recover. Bring your Peace to all who are suffering today.

Response: Lord from our lips and our hearts

All: Please hear our prayers

We pray for the needs of our loved ones, our friends and our neighbours and that we be mindful of the differing needs of those we meet. Help us to be there when needed, sharing the high and happy parts of life and supportive during the lowest and most challenging times. We remember all in special need this morning and bring before you those ill at home or in hospital and those who care for them. We bring before you those who feel no one cares for or about them, for the unemployed, the poor, the lonely, the depressed and those suffering injustice and neglect. May we come beside those in need as you make them known to us. And now, in a moment of silence, please pray for those persons you know who need your prayers today

Response: Lord from our lips and our hearts

All: Please hear our prayers

Finally, Lord, we pray for ourselves. Father, as we have already prayed, please forgive us our trespasses. From today's word make us merciful servants that honour you in our service with appropriate 'words in season'. Although we are weak and often take our

gaze from you, help us to return to your side through prayer. May during this week ahead of us frequently find places, where you are to be found and where we can speak together and learn more from you.

Response: Lord from our lips and our hearts

All: Please hear our prayers

Hymn StF 664 Lord, you call us to your service

Lord, you call us to your service,
each in our own way.
Some to caring, loving, healing;
some to preach, or pray;
some to work with quiet learning,
truth discerning,
day by day

Life for us is always changing
in the work we share.
Christian love adds new dimensions
to the way we care.
For we know that you could lead us,
as you need us,
anywhere.

Seeing life from your perspective
makes your challenge plain,
as your heart is grieving over
those who live in pain.
Teach us how, by our compassion,
you may fashion
hope again.

Lord, we set our human limits
on the work we do.
Send us your directing Spirit,
pour your power through,
that we may be free in living
and in giving
all for you.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=siBX8rVyc4>

Blessing

May the god in whose image we are made,
strengthen us in our struggle,
embrace us in our weakness,
and inspire us with hope for a different future:
as we work, separately and together,
for the freedom of the whole creation.

Ref: Certain material used from resources of Churches Together in England - Education Sunday 2021

https://www.cte.org.uk/Groups/364282/Home/Resources/Education_Sunday/Education_Sunday_2021/Education_Sunday_2021.aspx