

This short act of worship has been prepared for you by Helen Lunn to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

A warm welcome to each of you this morning. We offer God this time, our hearts and our lives, as we come together to worship him.

Call to worship

We are called to recognise God's authority and to submit to it in every area of our lives.
Let us invite God to direct our thinking and our prayers.
Let us give God the highest place in our lives.
Let us worship the living God.

Hymn Christ is the world's light – Singing the Faith 346

Sing / read / pray / proclaim the words or listen to it here

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ne5MOMp6W_Y

Christ is the world's light, Christ and none other;
born in our darkness, he became our brother.
If we have seen him, we have seen the Father:
glory to God on high.

Christ is the world's Peace, Christ and none other;
no one can serve him and despise another;
who else unites us, one in God the Father?
Glory to God on high.

Christ is the world's Life, Christ and none other;
sold once for silver, murdered here, our brother-
he, who redeems us, reigns with God the Father:
glory to God on high.

Give God the glory, God and none other;
give God the glory, Spirit, Son, and Father;
give God the glory, God with us, my brother:
glory to God on high.

Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000) Words: © 1969, Stainer & Bell Ltd,
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Prayer

Let us pray

Almighty God,
we recognise that all authority
in heaven and on earth belongs to you.
We pray that you draw near to us today,
to impart your truth and show us your way.

Happy and blessed are those who walk in wisdom.
Come let us seek the authority and wisdom of the Lord
in our reverence and worship of him.

Father God, holy and majestic, what an impression faith in you
has made on our lives! God of all wisdom, you are the source
of all authority in heaven and earth.

Compassionate Lord Jesus, what an indelible impression you
have made on our spirit! Lovingly speaking through your life on
earth: your sacrificial authority on the cross breaking through
the barriers of sin.

Awesome Holy Spirit, what an impression you make on our
life! Through our faith, you continue to impress upon us the
supreme wisdom of God, gracious and fair.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, source of all authority in heaven
and earth, eternal praise belongs to you.

O God, when Jesus spoke in the synagogue, everyone was
astonished by the absolute authority of his words and
presence. In today's world, it is so easy to be taken in by
someone's words or their favourable, commanding presence.
We think, perhaps, of people in the media, the music scene
and social networks. But, unfortunately, not everyone's words
have integrity or match their actions. O God, help us to discern
who to give credence to.

Forgive us when our own words or actions don't marry with
our calling. Help us to speak and act with integrity at all times.
Help us also, O God, not to jump to conclusions by first
impressions, preconceptions or prejudices – anything that
turns us against people who don't quite fit our expectations of

them. Yet you may wish to speak through them. Forgive us when we jump to wrong conclusions. Forgive us for judging. Help us to seek your wisdom, to see and hear you in all people regardless of age, appearance or background.

In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

Bible Reading Mark 1: 21-28 New International Version

They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

"Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him." News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

Reflection

In Jesus' time, there was an urgent hope that there would arise a prophet like Moses whose relationship with God would give new life to Israel's traditions. In Mark, Jesus is recognised as one with such personal authority.

Can we identify where we have benefited from the exercise of good authority? Most people can clearly remember and name their favourite school teacher. When I was at primary school, I can remember the head teacher Miss Turner, she was willing to give everyone a chance at things. She was the one who let me be the lead in the school play Babushka. She supported people through everything. She was still the head of the school for a long time until her retirement and she had the respect of every pupil in the school. I also remember at college my music teacher Katherine who took a group of us on a trip to Hungary to stay at a music school for a week.

I think of teachers like these and I'm amazed at the impact

they've had on my life and the lives of so many other students. I'm amazed at the way good teachers continue to feed us long after we've left their presence. They are poorly paid, they spend long hours in school, and now also online and they have to deal with some kids that don't want to learn, they won't ever be famous, yet what power they have.

But I also had some lousy teachers too. You probably did as well. They also had power and often used it the wrong way. Teachers are powerful. They can change lives. They have the power to brutally wound or wonderfully heal young lives.

It is into this world of powerful teachers that our Gospel lesson calls us to enter. It is early in the ministry of Jesus in the gospel of Mark. Mark has no birth narrative, no childhood stories. Mark begins with John the Baptist preparing the way with his preaching, and with the baptism of Jesus, and then jumps immediately into Jesus' calling the disciples and the beginning of his ministry. And that's where we are today — the beginning of Jesus' ministry. And how does it begin? With teaching. But not just any kind of teaching, it is teaching unlike that of the scribes, it is teaching with "authority."

How can we bring Jesus' authority to bear on disharmony in our world, local community and church? Thousands of Christians took part in the Jubilee 2000 campaign. They chose

to show their commitment to the Bible's teaching on economic justice in this way. They walked in Jesus' footsteps by joining together words and action.

Before I got married, I used to be a Street Angel in Hull. We used to go along a street called Princes Avenue helping people who were a bit worse for wear due to being out drinking on a Friday and Saturday evening. We didn't preach from the Bible to them, instead we showed God's love in action by giving out water, doing first aid, giving out flip flops and helping them when they were in need. We were walking in Jesus footsteps, working with those who wouldn't necessarily step foot in the church.

The man with an unclean spirit had been cast out, the lowest of the low in the pecking order, yet he is one upon whom Jesus bestows his first gift of healing. Many people avoid worship and church when they are down. Do we preach the gospel to the weak or to the strong? How can we break through the power trap and model our own brokenness, giving God the scope? Can we really acknowledge that it is when we are weakest that God works most powerfully?

Jesus brings freedom to those in physical and spiritual oppression. He did an amazing thing for us, dying on the cross for our wrongdoing, and we may have stories of how he has

healed us and set us free in different ways. The result of experiencing God's blessing is that we will want to tell others about what Jesus has done for us.

In this way the good news travels and attracts attention.

I am willing to share my story, are you?

Prayers of Intercession

We pray for those who are feeling weak,
for those who are hungry or thirsty,
for those who are homeless,
for those who are prisoners,
for those who are ill...
Lord, hear our prayer
and give your strength.

We pray for those who are feeling weak,
for those who are lonely,
for those with mental health problems,
for those who doubt and those who struggle,
for the bereaved...
Lord, hear our prayer
and give your strength.

We pray for those who are feeling weak,
for those who work for change in our world,

for those who have power but cannot see how to use it,
for those who have no voice...
Lord, hear our prayer
and give your strength.

We pray for those who are feeling weak,
for those we worry about,
for those we find it hard to love,
for those whose lives pass without notice...
Lord, hear our prayer
and give your strength.

We pray for ourselves in our weakness,
for the commitment to serve you and others,
for the desire to serve you and others,
for delight in serving you and others.
Lord, hear our prayer
and give your strength.
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 Jesus Christ is waiting Singing the Faith 251

Sing / read / pray / proclaim the words or listen to it here

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

Jesus Christ is waiting,
waiting in the streets;
no one is his neighbour,
all alone he eats.
Listen, Lord Jesus,
I am lonely too:

make me, friend or stranger,
fit to wait on you.

Jesus Christ is raging,
raging in the streets,
where injustice spirals
and real hope retreats.
Listen, Lord Jesus,
I am angry too:
in the Kingdom's causes
let me rage with you.

Jesus Christ is healing,
healing in the streets,
curing those who suffer,
touching those he greets.
Listen, Lord Jesus,
I have pity too:
let my care be active,
healing, just like you.

Jesus Christ is dancing,
dancing in the streets,
where each sign of hatred
he, with love, defeats.
Listen, Lord Jesus,
I should triumph too:
where good conquers evil
let me dance with you.

Jesus Christ is calling,
calling in the streets,
'Who will join my journey?
I will guide their feet.'
Listen, Lord Jesus,
let my fears be few:
walk one step before me;
I will follow you.

John L. Bell (b. 1949) and Graham Maule (b. 1958) Words: From *Enemy of Apathy* © 1988, WGRG, Iona Community, Glasgow G2 3DH Scotland.
<www.wgrg.co.uk>

Blessing

Almighty God, be with us this week.
Meet with us each morning,
and in every situation throughout the day,
whoever we are with,
help us to draw on your strength and wisdom,
that we may be faithful and true
in following the example and pattern
given to us by Jesus.

Amen.