

This short act of worship has been produced for you by Revd Valentin Dedji. If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church - pray for them as they pray for you.

Welcome & Invocation:

Hymn: 'Another Year is Dawning' (Methodist Hymn Book 954)

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

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnU-ZaFfB_4

Another year is dawning, dear Father, let it be
In working or in waiting, another year with Thee;
Another year of progress, another year of praise,
Another year of proving Thy presence all the days.

Another year of mercies, of faithfulness and grace,
Another year of gladness in the shining of Thy face;
Another year of leaning upon Thy loving breast;
Another year of trusting, of quiet, happy rest.

Another year of service, of witness for Thy love,
Another year of training for holier work above;
Another year is dawning, dear Father, let it be
On earth, or else in Heaven, another year for Thee.

(Frances Havergal, 1836-1879)

Prayers of Adoration:

O Heavenly Father, we will bless your name at all times,
That, in your Grace and Mercy, you have given us another year.
We pray that you may let it be
In working or in waiting, another year with You;
Another year of progress, another year of praise,
Another year of proving your presence all the days.
For this, we magnify you, O LORD Jesus Christ,
with an attitude of gratitude,
we exalt your name forever and ever.
O let us taste and see that the LORD is good;

Happy are those who take refuge in him.
May the name of the Lord be blessed. **Amen!**

Prayers of Spiritual Renewal and Dedication:

Now then, my God, you have my soul,
No longer mine, but yours I am;
O guard me as your own possession,
Cheer my soul with hope, inflame it with your love;
You have my spirit, may you display in it your glory
Lord, arm me with your Spirit's might,
Since I am called by your great name;
In you let all my thoughts unite,
May all my works have you as their aim;

May your love attend me all my days,
And my sole business be focussed towards your praise!

Through Jesus Christ, I pray. **Amen!**

Bible Reading: Colossians 2: 6-10 (NLT)

⁶And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. ⁷Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. ⁸Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ. ⁹For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. ¹⁰So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

Sermon: 'Dedicated to Christ, Rooted in Him'

Dear Friends, one of the biggest spiritual lessons that I have learnt during the last two years is that, to truly worship God, we don't need a house full of people. Instead, what we need is a house full of God's presence. For, wherever God is present, Jesus Christ takes His rightful presence on the Throne of Grace. And wherever Jesus is proclaimed as Lord and Saviour, the

Presence of the Holy Spirit overflows. And wherever the Holy Spirit overflows, God's abundant blessings overflow. God enjoys meeting you where you are, developing a personal relationship with you, and helping you grow to become everything He wants you to be. So, wherever you are following this service from, let God's presence enfold you; let the presence of the Holy Spirit fill your heart and mind. Amen!

Having said that, I bear in mind that, just about three weeks ago, we celebrated the birth of Jesus Christ as our IMMANUEL, God with us. Also, we are currently in the season where people called Methodist are invited to renew their Covenant with God. Let me remind you that, the Covenant service that was celebrated for the first time by John Wesley in 1755, still remains today, an opportunity of solemn reflection and rededication to God, especially at the beginning of a new year. It is with this in mind that, I would like to reflect with you on the theme: **'DEDICATED TO CHRIST, ROOTED IN HIM AND BUILT ON HIM'**

I still remember very vividly the very first time that I visited the Desert of Kalahari in South Africa. It is full of different kinds of vegetation. But the contrasts are fascinating. The dried-up, brittle tumbleweed blows everywhere. Why? Because it has no roots. By contrast, the saguaro cactus bears fruit even in 130-degree weather. Why? Because its roots go out fifty to sixty

feet in all directions.

St Paul writes this: ***‘Just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. Don’t let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ... you...are complete through your union with Christ.’*** (Extracts from Colossians 2: 6-10 NLT).

Without attempting at making any theological discussions out of the passage here-above quoted, let me share with you some of the spiritual lessons that I draw from it:

1) In and out of seasons, and especially considering the context of health crisis that the whole is currently going through, we need deep spiritual roots if we are going to make it through what I call the ‘dry spells’ of life. When the Bible speaks of ‘heat’, it’s speaking about the pressures of life. When it speaks about ‘drought’, it’s speaking about seasons of crisis and lack. Anyone can survive a day or two of drought, but what about extended seasons of stress, grief, lack, illness and adversity? Of course, being a Christian does not exempt us from the storms of life. But it does make a massive difference when we make a conscious decision, not only to dedicate our life to Christ, the

Immanuel (God – with us), and to get rooted in him.

Then for sure, we know that we will not be going through the ‘dry spells’ of life on our own, as if we were clueless and rootless. Let’s remember that, whatever your life is rooted to – is what you will draw your strength from. This reminds me the chorus of the well-known hymn that goes like this:

***We have an anchor that keeps the soul
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour’s love.***

2) When we talk about being dedicated to Christ, being rooted in him and being built on him, you don’t need to belong to a special breed of people to do so. God does not make his covenant with an exclusive group of ‘predestined’ individuals; no, God always chooses sinful people like you and call us to become ‘saints’ by His Grace. Whatever our race, our age, or gender or our social background, we too have the privilege of being Christ’s guests of honour. It is true that not everyone responds to God, but in calling his people to engage in a Covenant with him, God has everyone in his view. The blood that Jesus shed was not for the few, but for the many - a way of saying that it was for all, including you and me. This is where one of my favourite Bible verses comes in:

‘For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him, may not perish, but have eternal life.’ (John 3:16).

3) Finally, during my personal devotion on the New Year Day, 1st January, I read a reflection that really touched my heart. It goes like this: ‘Whatever you do during this New Year, make it your priority to glorify God, to obey God and to enjoy God. For when you know that the main purpose of your life is glorifying God, you enjoy His presence. For, it is God’s presence through Christ in every aspect of your life that will make you succeed.’

In conclusion, succeeding in being dedicated to Christ, being rooted in him and being built upon him has some practical implications for our daily life. We do need to demonstrate that we live a life that bears the fruit of the Spirit such as: ‘Love, joy, peace, compassion, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control’ (Galatians 5:22-23).

God knows that, in the context of our world today, those kinds of fruit are urgently needed in our families, churches and local communities. More than ever throughout this New Year, Christ still wants to make us his precious co-partners in His Mission in our world today. What a privilege! Therefore, let’s not hesitate to make the first step by praying sincerely today: ‘Lord,

consecrate me to you, let me be deeply rooted in you, and let me be built upon you.’ **AMEN!**

Prayers of Intercession

O Heavenly Father,

We pray for a world where every child, every vulnerable person finds welcome in a sheltered place, where love is tender, undefiled, and firmness intertwines with grace.

Lord Jesus, we pray for a nation just and fair that seeks the welfare of us all, where leaders guide with prudent care and nurture life for great and small.

Finally, we pray for a world where all have voice, a place where humility and servanthood would reign over a spirit of competition and selfishness. Till then, may all have rightful choice for compassion, solidarity and mutual care. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. **Amen!**

Hymn: Through the Love of God our Saviour (Singing the Faith) 639

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qhMfQF9IK4>

Through the love of God our Saviour
all will be well;
Free and changeless is His favour;
all, all is well.
Precious is the blood that healed us,
perfect is the grace that sealed us,
strong the hand stretched forth to shield us;
all must be well.

Though we pass through tribulation,
all will be well.
Christ has purchased full salvation,
all, all is well.
Happy still in God confiding,
fruitful, if in Christ abiding,
holy through the Spirit's guiding;
all must be well.

We expect a bright tomorrow;
all will be well.

Faith can sing through days of sorrow
all, all is well.
On our Father's love relying,
Jesus every need supplying,
then in living or in dying,
all must be well.

Mary Peters (1813-1856)

Blessing:

May the Lord bless you and make His face to shine upon you.
May He grant you His peace. **Amen!**

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