

Good morning and a warm welcome to worship on this second Sunday in September.
As we begin, I invite you to read the words of our first hymn, MP 50.

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here;
Come bow before Him now, with reverence and fear;
in Him no sin is found- we stand on holy ground,
Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy one is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around;
He burns with holy fire, with splendour he is crowned;
how awesome is the sight- our radiant King of light!
Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place;
He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister his grace-
no work too hard for Him, In faith receive from him.
Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.

PRAYERS OF APPROACH, PRAISE AND CONFESSION.

Father, help us as we worship, to recognise Christ is here amongst us.
help us to glimpse your glory through Him.
to hear his voice through this service, to feel his love through our fellowship,
and to see more clearly where we can serve him in the needs of the world.

Forgive us Lord, for those things we should have done, but have left undone.
Forgive us for all the opportunities we have missed,
Forgive us for all our failures to serve you as we promised,

Renew us now through your Spirit,
Restore us through the love of Christ.
Remake us in your likeness,
Assure us of your forgiveness.

Almighty and sovereign God, we worship you.
We offer you our praise, we bring you our joyful thanksgiving.
We acknowledge you as Lord and master of our lives.
Come among us this day with new power,
inspire us with new vision, fill us with new hope.

Accept Lord our songs of praise, our words of prayer.
The thoughts of our hearts, as we worship together.
Praise and honour, thanksgiving and worship are yours by right.
Fill us with the knowledge of your presence, and so help us to walk each day
in the light of your love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. 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.

Our reading this morning is taken from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians chapter 1 verses 1-10.NLT.

1 This letter is from Paul, Silas, and Timothy.
We are writing to the church in Thessalonica , to you who belong to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
May God give you grace and peace.
2 We always thank God for all of you and pray for you constantly.
3 As we pray to our God and Father about you, we think of your faithful work, your loving deeds, and the enduring hope you have because of our Lord Jesus Christ.
4 We know, dear brothers and sisters, that God loves you and has chosen you to be his own people.
5 For when we brought you the Good News, it was not only with words but also with power, for the Holy Spirit gave you full assurance that what we said was true
And you know of our concern for you from the way we lived when we were with you.
6 So you received the message with joy from the Holy Spirit, in spite of the severe suffering it brought you. In this way you imitated both us and the Lord.
7 As a result, you have become an example to all the believers in Greece- throughout both Macedonia and Achaia.
8 And now the word of the Lord is ringing out from you to people everywhere, even beyond Macedonia and Achaia, for everywhere we go we find people telling us about your faith in God.
We don't need to tell them about it,
9 for they keep talking about the wonderful welcome you gave us and how you turned away from idols to serve the living and true God.
10 And they speak of how you are looking forward to the coming of God's Son from heaven- Jesus, whom God raised from the dead.
He is the one who has rescued us from the terrors of the coming judgement.

SERMON.

Paul wrote many letters to the churches he had started around the Mediterranean.
You could say, that the two that he wrote to the Thessalonians are special.
They are tucked away towards the end of the Bible and are probably the earliest letters Paul wrote, dating from before AD 50, less than 20 years after Jesus' death and resurrection..
These letters, though fairly short, give us a detailed picture of part of Paul's ministry.
Paul prayerfully affirms and encourages the Thessalonian Church, gently reminding them to be patient and steadfast
commending them for the way they have lived out and shared the gospel.
They had been through some very desperate and difficult times facing heavy opposition.
Because of this, Paul had to leave this new church. that he had helped to create, earlier than he had planned.
Some important questions were left unanswered, and there was a cloud left over his reputation as a dedicated minister.

Just a brief look at the background to this letter.

The letter itself is just a prayer isn't it?
A prayer for the church in Thessalonica.
A prayer for our churches in the Kettering and Corby circuit.

Paul, amongst many things, is a great encourager.
This surely is something we all need a lot of in these very different and often difficult times we are going through now.

The three key words which we find in this letter are Faith, Love and Hope.
These three qualities appear together in the very familiar passage in 1Corinthians chapter 13.
But here, they are all linked to Christian service.
If God cares, and he does, and we have faith in God, then there is work to be done.

Paul writes "Remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ".

WORK inspired by faith becomes a work of faith.

LABOUR prompted by love becomes a labour of love,

ENDURANCE founded on hope brings steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Friends, I feel it is good for us to be reminded that even in such times as these, that we are going through now,
this endurance, that we need is inspired by Hope, the hope that our labour in the Lord is never in vain.
We continue to work and serve God, as best we can, as we come through this post pandemic time.
We continue always hopeful that our faith is prompted by our love for God, and this brings us certainty and assurance.

The beginning of September is known as the start of the new Methodist Church year.

Ministers moving to new appointments.

As you will be aware. Rev Noel Nhariswa and his family are preparing to begin a new ministry here with us in Kettering and Corby.

They will be living in Rothwell.

They have been through such a lot of uncertainty. When they would be coming, if they would be coming ,even,?

A lot of prayer has surrounded them and I know that they have been ever hopeful and certain that God is always with them.

Well these times are certainly different aren't they, for all of us in various ways?And have been over the last six months.

As we move forward may we all take this theme of Paul's with us. This prayer. Why?

Hope produces patience, which is the long suffering endurance needed to not only survive hard times but to triumph over them.

Some of you may have noticed that the reading I have chosen for today is not one of the appointed lectionary readings.

It actually appears at the end of October.

I was prompted to use this reading to link to a news item from August 4th, which has stayed with me

You may well have heard about it.

On Tuesday 4th August there was an explosion in Beirut, in Lebanon, causing devastation and around 200 people lost their lives.

St. Dimitries Greek Orthodox Church in Achrafien is less than a kilometre away from where the explosion took place in the port of Beirut.

Father Youir Nassif rushed to the church to check for damage, finding the nave completely ruined.

But the sacred altar space, protected by the "iconostasis" (wall of icons) was almost unscathed- including an oil lamp that had remained lit throughout the blast.

.This news item actually took the form of a video.

Father Nassif explained that the survival of the church altar was taken as a sign of hope in the midst of crisis.

SONG ; FAITHFUL ONE

Faithful One, so unchanging;

ageless One, You're my rock of peace.

Lord of all, i depend on You,

I call out to You again and again, I call out to You again and again.

You are my rock in times of trouble,

You lift me up when I fall down,

all through the storm Your love is the anchor-

my hope is in You alone.

PRAYERS FOR LEBANON

Father Nassif asked for our prayers.

So let us pray.

We pray for those who live and work in Beirut
That the bereaved may continue to be consoled,
and the injured comforted and healed.

In the midst of catastrophe, we pray for peace, truth and justice.
As the sound of the explosion has faded now, and the smoke has cleared,
give wisdom, we pray, to those who lead,
courage and hope to all. Amen

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION from STF 718.

We lay our broken world, in sorrow at your feet,
haunted by hunger, war and fear- oppressed by power and hate.
Here human life seems less than profit, might and pride,
though to unite us all in you, you lived and loved and died.
We bring our broken towns, our neighbours hurt and bruised;
you show us how old pains and wounds for new life can be used.
We bring our broken loves, friends parted, families torn,
then in your life and death we see that love must be reborn.
We bring our broken selves, confused and closed and tired,
then through your gift of healing grace, new purpose is inspired.
O Spirit on us breathe, with life and strength anew,
find in us love and hope and trust, and lift us up to you.
Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

All my hope on God is founded
He doth still my trust renew.
me through change and chance he guideth,
Only good and only true.
God unknown,
He alone.
calls my heart to be his own.

God's great goodness aye endureth,
Deep his wisdom, passing thought
Splendour, light and life attend him,
Beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore, from his store
New born worlds rise and adore.

Pride of man and earthly glory,
Sword and crown betray his trust
What with care and toil he buildeth
tower and temple fall to dust.
But God's power,
hour by hour
is my temple and my tower.

Still from man to God eternal
Sacrifice of praise be done,
High above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ his Son
Christ doth call
One and all,
Ye who follow shall not fall.

CLOSING PRAYER.

Loving God, lead us out into the world,
renewed in vigour, in hope, in faith, and in purpose.

Send us back to live and work for you,
sharing your love, and living your life,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you always .
Amen.