

Apart but Together Worship
Hornsea URC – Sunday 18th April 2021
Journeying with John- Chapter5

Welcome to today's service. Having taken a break for Lent, we restarted our journey through the gospel of John last week with Chapter 4 and today we are looking at Chapter 5.

We start with a call to worship from the Psalms: -

Psalm 95

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.
For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods.
In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.
Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.

Opening prayers

As we gather this morning,
We remember all that you have given us, and all that has been good this week, and we give you **thanks**
We remember now the times when what we say we believe has not matched how we have lived, and we say **sorry**
We acknowledge there will be those meeting here who are hurting and feeling lost, may they and all of us, know your presence with us today.
Amen.

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.

This is a jar containing notes of the things we have missed during lock-down and look forward to doing again. One of them reads 'standing up and singing in church'.

For the first hymn I have chosen a very well known one, so that you can stand and sing as loudly as you want in your own home!

Hymn- How great Thou art

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=dBLRsUMtuFQ->



Prayer

As we open God's book, may we remember that we're looking for Jesus, the rescue He offers, and how to live as His children. Amen

John 5 v.1-9a

Sometime later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie- the blind, the lame, the paralysed.

One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.

When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him "Do you want to get well?"

"Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no-one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."

Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.



John 5 v.9b-18

The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat." But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.' So, they asked him, "Who is this fellow who

told you to pick it up and walk?” The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too am working.”

For this reason, the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Reflection- the healing at the pool

Here is Jesus, in Jerusalem again for a festival. It would have been very busy with lots of visitors. We are told that at the pool there were a ‘great number’ of disabled people. The belief was that an angel would come and stir the waters and the first person in the pool after that would be healed.

One man was described as having been an invalid for 38 years. It seems amongst all these people Jesus noticed him, approached him, asked him if he wanted to be well and healed him. Notice the man did not get into the water. It all happened very quickly and we are told later that Jesus slipped away into the crowd so the man didn’t know who had healed him.

This man presumably had not walked for 38 years, it was a life changing moment for him- a miracle. In verse 14 we read that Jesus found him later and instructed him to change his ways! Though we don’t know the man’s name, his story is recorded here and like many we read about in John’s gospel, this encounter with Jesus changed him.

The title at the start of this chapter in my Bible reads ‘the healing at the pool’. I wonder if it should be called ‘the healing at the pool that got overshadowed by a mat’? When the Jews- those belonging to the hierarchy of priests, the religious establishment- met the man their focus was on the mat he was carrying. It was the sabbath and you were not allowed to carry a mat, it might be a sign that you were working; they had many rules and regulations about the Sabbath and what constituted work.

When challenged about the mat the healed man said “the man who healed me told me to pick it up”. Later, when he found out who it was, he reported back to the Jews and told them it was Jesus.

Now the Jews focus is on Jesus. He had ‘broken’ the Sabbath in their eyes and worse, he was calling God his Father. Now they were out to kill him.

Let us pause here and put our focus on the fact that the man met Jesus and was made whole. We sing together-

Song – Rescuer <https://youtu.be/-u2DFGKeARY>

Reflection- the healing at the pool overshadowed by a mat

In His confrontation with the Jews following this healing, Jesus points out that it was the work of God.

He says- (verse 17)-*My Father is always at his work to this very day and I too am working.*

And later (verse 19) *the Son can do nothing by Himself, he can only do what he sees the Father doing.* That reminded me of Jesus talking about being 'about my Fathers business'

Do you remember reading in Chapter 3 about Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council? He said to Jesus *"Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no-one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."* It seems Nicodemus recognised God at work through Jesus.

Jesus was very clear in his dealings with the Jews here. In verse 24 he says *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life"*

Still they didn't understand. They were dutiful, they knew the scriptures, the law, and thought that trusting in the law of Moses entitled them to eternal life. In their eyes strict observance of the rules was the way to go. Listen to verses 39 and 40 of this chapter, from the Message-

You have your heads in your Bibles constantly because you think you'll find eternal life there. But you miss the forest for the trees. These scriptures are all about me! And here I am standing right before you and you aren't willing to receive from me the life you say you want.

Not seeing the wood for the trees is possible today. It is possible to read, study and discuss the scriptures and not see the point- the person. To concentrate on the detail and not the bigger picture of loving God offering to rescue us, to include us in His story.

I wonder if as a church (in the widest sense) we over complicate the gospel? Do we celebrate enough, the lives that are changed, God at His work in His World?

Song- God is working His purpose out

<https://youtu.be/Cr3goa3DXsw>



Our 'New Normal'

This week has seen the start of the easing of lockdown restrictions. We have had plenty of practice at following the letter of the law. I wonder what you are most looking forward to as individuals and as a church? Will we focus on the details, want everything 'normal', or will we dare to imagine a bigger picture?

Here are some words from Gemma Simmonds, Sister of the Congregation of Jesus;

Jesus comes, not with ready made solutions, but with an invitation to meet a God greater than our own images, beyond the limits of our interpretations and understandings.

Song- Praise you Lord

<https://youtu.be/CdCIHOdwyZ8>

Prayers

In John 5 today we read of someone who felt overlooked and forgotten, and disappointed at how his life was turning out.

We also read of religious leaders so focused on keeping the letter of the law they tried to stop Jesus ministry because it did not fit with THEIR religious agenda.

So in our prayers today lets bring to God

The overlooked and forgotten,

The disappointed

And religious leaders, and all people of faith.

Towards the end of John 5, Jesus also reflects on how through Him we may cross from death to eternal life, so as The Duke of Edinburgh was laid to rest yesterday we pray for The Queen, The Royal Family, and our own nearest and dearest too.

At the end of each prayer I'll say

Lord in your mercy

Do join in if you wish with

Hear our prayer.

We pray first for those in life who are overlooked and forgotten like the man in John 5 who had no one – friend or family - to help him to the pool, until Jesus noticed him.

Lord by definition we probably can't name the people we're praying for, but we know you know and love them and long for them to know your love, - and human respect and care too.

Open our eyes and soften our hearts so you can show us those you want us to notice and love in your name.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

The man in John 5 had lived a life of disappointment for 38 years – hoping his life might change for the better - but it never did. That is until he met Jesus.

We are aware so many people are living with crushing disappointments at the moment because of the pandemic: jobs lost, medical appointments postponed, weddings on hold, families separated.

Lord we lift to you those who are experiencing deep disappointment - including perhaps ourselves.

We know our faith is not like a magic wand that always makes things better in the twinkling of an eye, but we know too that your presence can bring peace and healing into the hardest of situations.

So we lift to you the disappointed, those who feel at the end of their tether

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Its easy now Lord to see where the religious leaders went wrong in Jesus' day, getting so fixated with the way things had always been done, that they rejected Jesus, the Son of God!

But we recognise something similar could happen too in in our day unless we stay open to your Spirit.

So we pray for our leaders here at Hornsea URC and the wider church.

Help them, and us Lord, to see the wood from the trees and to be prepared to see the bigger picture, and do things differently if you are calling us to change.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

And finally Lord as The Duke of Edinburgh was laid to rest yesterday we pray for The Queen and The Royal Family as they mourn.

The service spoke of the hope of eternal life through Jesus, but recognised too the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death so we pray today for them and for ALL who mourn

We also lift to God any of OUR family and friends in special need at this time – perhaps grieving or unwell, or worried, or with relationship or other difficulties.

We pause for a moment to remember them before God.

And from our church virtual prayer book we name :

Mark and Kate and family

Dawn

Jason and Stacie

Brenda

Margaret

Ken

We offer these, and all our prayer, through Jesus as we say

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Song- When the Saints

<https://youtu.be/advInJPEbEw>

Closing prayer-

Ephesians 3 v20-21 (NLT)

Now all glory to God, who is able through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.

Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever.

Amen.