

# Stokesley Methodist Church



**Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2018**

*Welcome to Worship*

10.30am Morning Worship led by Rev Andrew Robinson  
including the Sacrament of Holy Communion  
6.00pm Town Close with Vanessa Johnson

## **A Gathering Prayer from the Roots Resources**

We come, heart and mind, to worship God together in this place. Whether we feel bruised or triumphant, sad or joyful, let us lift our hands to praise our God, and acknowledge his worth. Help us, God, to find here with each other, and as fellow travellers, that we can support and encourage one another. Let us draw close to Almighty God, focusing on God's voice, pressing pause on the clamour of our world and the busyness of our lives.

Let us take time to slow our minds and open our hearts, in preparation to receive what God wants to give us today. Let us drop the masks we wear and be honest before God and one another.

In Jesus' name we come, and in his name, we pray.

**Amen.**

## **Lectionary Readings:**

**Song of Songs 2 v8-13** Beloved

*"Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come with me. See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone. Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come ..."*

**Psalms 45 v1-2, 6-9**

*"... therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy. All your robes are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia; from palaces adorned with ivory the music of the strings makes you glad."*

**James 1 v17-27** Listening and Doing

*"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."*

**Mark 7 v1-8, 14-15, 21-23** Clean and Unclean

*"Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a man can make him unclean by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him unclean."*

## **Does it Matter?**

In this week's reading from Mark we see some Pharisees and scribes accuse Jesus' disciples of eating with defiled (i.e. unwashed) hands. Jesus tells the Pharisees that they honour God with their lips but not their hearts. It is evil intentions from the heart that defile a person.

We turn our thoughts to exploring hypocrisy and authenticity. What happens when someone gets angry? They usually get red in the face, they look very unhappy and they talk fast in a loud voice, sometimes shouting. They may even strike out at another person. We've all felt angry. There are many things that happen or go on

in the world that give us good reason to be angry. It is normal and natural and there are times when we must act on our anger to protect ourselves or another person.

However what the Bible teaches, and what we must understand, is how to become “slow to anger.” We must learn not to act impulsively. We must take time to stop and think about what happened to cause this feeling. We must take time to think about what we want to do about it? We have many choices and sometimes the best choice is to let go of our anger. When we hold on to anger we give the person who hurt us too much power. Our Bible verse suggests this: ‘that everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry ...’

Think about letting go of your anger – take your power back.

Decide if you really want to feel angry or if you would rather feel peaceful. Most of the time, when we feel angry, it does not achieve God’s purpose. And what is God’s purpose?

Do you wash your hands before you eat? Clean hands help us stay healthy. Dirty hands might have germs on them that can make us sick. So, it’s important to wash our hands. In this week’s gospel reading, some people noticed that some of Jesus’s followers were eating without first washing their hands. Those people asked Jesus why his disciples ate with unwashed hands. Jesus responded to the people who questioned him, but he talked about something very different.

Jesus talked about following God. The people who were asking the question about unwashed hands might have had clean hands, because they were following tradition. Tradition is something like a habit. Tradition is something we do every day without even thinking about it, like washing our hands before we eat.

Jesus knows our hearts and he knew the hearts of the people who were complaining about his followers’ unwashed hands. He told

them they were like people the prophet Isaiah wrote about, “You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.” (v8) It sounds like Jesus was unhappy with those people for thinking that clean hands were more important than a clean heart.

Jesus wasn’t saying that washing our hands is wrong. Instead, he was reminding the people that they were not living faithfully for God. In fact they were not honouring God by following God’s rules. Jesus said, ‘These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.’ (v6)

We don’t want to eat food contaminated by germs that will make us sick. That’s why we have soap and water, so we can wash our hands. But even more important, we don’t want to hear, say or read words that will contaminate our minds and hearts. That’s why we have Jesus and the Holy Bible so that we can know and do the truth.

The writers of this week’s passages insist that what we DO matters as much as what we believe. God’s purpose, and our task, is not for us to judge and condemn others for what they do, but to set before them the example of an alternative way of life, based not on complacency and a false sense of our own superiority, but on inner purity and outward compassion.

### **Sending Out Prayer**

We go, with the word of God in our hearts, praying that we will embody it in our lives, and be true witnesses to our great hope. Help us, Holy Spirit, to keep in step with you and grow more like Jesus every day.

**Amen.**