

# Stokesley Methodist Church



**Sunday 4th November, 2018**

*Welcome to Worship*

10.30am Morning Worship led by Rev Andrew Robinson

Including the Sacrament of Holy Communion

6.00pm Town Close with Rev Andrew Robinson

Including the Sacrament of Holy Communion

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

Blessed are those who set their hearts on God and hold fast to his word. Blessed are those who are faithful in prayer, and whose songs are of praise. Blessed are those who listen to the teachings of Scripture and live them out.

Blessed are we as we gather together to worship in Jesus' name – for he is here, he is among us.

As the Israelites listened to Moses, so we open our hearts to hear your word, O God.

As the scribes listened to Jesus, so we open our hearts to hear his teaching, O God.

We bring our lives to you:

bles and shape them to your glory.

**Amen.**

## **Lectionary Readings:**

**Ruth 1 v1-18** Naomi and Ruth

*“But Ruth replied, ‘Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.’”*

**Psalm 146**

*“The Lord loves the righteous.”*

**Hebrews 9 v11-14** The Blood of Christ

*“How much more then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God.”*

**Mark 12 v28-34** The Greatest Commandment

*“To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”*

## **Listen!**

In this week's reading from Mark we hear how a scribe commends Jesus' choice of the two greatest commandments from the teaching of Moses, and Jesus tells the scribe he is not far from the kingdom of God. Jesus is now in Jerusalem, preparing for Passover. He continues to attract the attention of the Jewish authorities, represented here by a scribe, one of Moses' official interpreters. The scribe has overheard Jesus' arguments with the Pharisees and Sadducees (Mark 12 v13-27). Jesus unites members of these very different Jewish factions in their opposition to him! This scribe, however, is more sympathetic. He wants to know which of the more than 600 laws of Moses is the key that unlocks the meaning of the whole.

Jesus brings together Deuteronomy 6 v5 and Leviticus 19 v18. Holiness shows itself in love, not separation. Wholehearted love for God

translates into love for neighbour, and creates community in the face of all that promotes sectarian mentalities and separatist practices, within God's people and between Israel and the wider world. In Leviticus 19 v17, the neighbour is 'anyone of your kin', but also includes 'the poor and the alien', (i.e. foreigner), who are to benefit from the harvest (Leviticus 19 v9-10). Here lies the inspiration for Jesus' parable of the compassionate foreigner (the 'good Samaritan') in Luke 10 v29-37. Notice the scribe's affinity towards Jesus' teaching, and Jesus' reciprocation warmly endorsing the scribe's wisdom. The scribe is 'not far from the kingdom of God' because he understands what God desires most. Like the prophets, he recognises the delusions of misplaced religious devotion. And his wise words anticipate Jesus' later remarks as he leaves the Temple (Mark 13 v2).

Jesus' interpretation of the Law of Moses refines his re-ordering of the world in readiness for the coming of God's kingdom. Faith and prayer are the weapons he commends (Mark 9 v23, 29; 10 v52). Listening and attentiveness are the dispositions God requires (Mark 9 v7; 12 v29). Wholehearted and all-embracing love informs and shapes the liberating service he offers (Mark 10 v45; 12 v30-31).

In the Gospel reading, Jesus sees love for God and neighbour as the hallmarks of true holiness.

"**Love Is an Open Door**" is a song written by Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez for Walt Disney Animation Studios's 53rd animated feature film *Frozen* (2013). "Love Is an Open Door" is a romantic duet which takes place during the first act of the film, when Anna meets Prince Hans during the reception of her sister Elsa's coronation.

Throughout the movie, there's a lot of doors being opened, shut, locked, unlocked, built, knocked on, leaned up against, and so on. But what does it all mean?

That song/scene had underlying pretences because Prince Hans had other plans for the sisters. Anna gladly opened that door for him only to mistake his welcoming façade as true love.

On the other hand, Elsa literally and figuratively kept all doors shut because she was not only afraid of hurting her sister, she was also afraid of herself. In protecting herself, she ended up hurting others around her including Anna. She also went through a lot of inner turmoil; she was not able to be herself, let alone share her love with Anna.

With that, this door message becomes much broader: life is an open door. It's all about being vulnerable. To face your fears. To love. To be yourself.

There are times when you need to close the door, but you should *never* lock it up. You can't live your life in both extremes, leaving your doors wide open or keeping them tightly shut.

Sometimes when you open that door, you'll get misunderstood and hurt. Other times, you'll get compassion and a "warm" embrace. There might also be times when you need to "turn away and slam the door" to work on yourself. The vulnerability this takes is by no means an easy feat. But with vulnerability comes courage, love, and growth which trumps living in fear, doubt, and isolation. More importantly, living life as an open door means being truthful, both to others and to yourself. So stop being scared and live life fearlessly. Stop concealing your true self. Stop gripping life's door knob so tightly.

Let it go.

Open the door and let love in. Open the door and let your love out. Show it, give it, use it.

### **Sending Out Prayer**

Go in the peace of Christ,  
with the words of God in your mind,  
with the love of your neighbour in your heart,  
and with the blessing of God on your life.

**Amen.**