**Westfield URC 18 July 2021 Christine Milner**

**Call to Worship**

Come and worship the one who gently guides and leads us, the Good Shepherd who restores our souls. Come open your hearts and minds to be aware of His presence as we bring our praise and thanksgiving.

**Hymn 307 I will enter ……………….**

I will enter His gates with thanksgiving in my heart,

I will enter His courts with praise;

I will say, ‘This is the day that the Lord has made,

I will rejoice for He has made me glad.’

He has made me glad, He has made me glad;

I will rejoice for He has made me glad.

He has made me glad, He has made me glad;

I will rejoice for He has made me glad.

Leona Von Brethorst © 1976 Maranatha! Music/CopyCare CCLI 150801

**Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Almighty God we give you thanks that we can enter your presence with thanksgiving and with joy because we are aware that you accept and love us – we come with our praise conscious that all we have is from your good hand, most of all we worship and adore you because of the salvation Jesus bought for us by His death on the cross and so we come to give you our praise and worship rejoicing together as members of your great family and so we join together in the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples ……….

**Our Father…………….**

**Notices and Mission Prayer (Duty Elder), Prayer for the Offering.**

**Theme today is;**

The Rhythm of Life - Rushing and Resting (or how we need to have a balance and make time for our own needs as Jesus did with His disciples – as we shall see in our reading)

**Reading Jeremiah 23 v 1-6**

**Mark 6 v 30-34, 53-56.**

**Hymns 50** Be still**…..**

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.

David J Evans ©1986 Kingsway's Thankyou Music

**Sermon**

Rhythm of Rushing & Resting

Reflect on the last 18 month – how was it for you? For many of us the rhythm of life over this period has been a strange one as we have adapted (hopefully) to all the restrictions and changes in what is lawful/unlawful during these months. For me and my husband the first few months of lockdown were a wonderful opportunity to take time out of many things which kept us busy. For Trevor this meant he could spend all day in the garden or sometimes in the house doing any number of tasks which had been crying out for attention!!

For me, I confess I spent many hours reading some of the books I never thought I’d get round to and I counted 30 in the first 3 to 4 weeks – then I stopped counting. It was an ideal time to also sort out drawers and cupboards but sadly the Charity shops were closed so the bags of stuff mounted up. I also made use of a book given to me by a friend in which each day you were supposed to list 3 things for which you were grateful.

So on the whole we enjoyed our changed lives – we found it peaceful and we made time for relaxing, reflection and of course those daily walks.

I guess for all of us our experiences during lockdown (and as restrictions continued) have had some similar features and yet no doubt our experiences have differed in other ways depending on our circumstances – but for all of us during those weeks and months of lockdown we wanted to live safely and keep our loved ones safe so on the whole we followed the rules.

In our first Bible reading from Jeremiah he contrasts two pictures of living safely – but it’s not with a virus in mind – but it is about who is in charge – who is responsible for the welfare of the people – who is ruling – and he likens rulers to shepherds.

Firstly he criticises the leaders of his day for they were not acting as good shepherds caring for the sheep (people) as they should have done and then he gave a prophetic message about one who was to come who would be a good shepherd. (Read Psalm 23)

In this psalm we have a picture of a good shepherd one who really cares for the sheep leading them to a place of refreshment and rest, it speaks of green pastures where the sheep can lie down rest – can be at peace.

For us in our lives we are often aware that for us to be able to rest and relax, to be at peace we need the equivalent of green pastures, a place (not necessarily a physical place) maybe a state of mind, to be free from worries, to be at peace, to be able to make a rhythm in life so that we take time to rest – being at peace, putting aside the issues & concerns which so often demand our attention- and then make time for our own needs.

In our reading from Mark 6 we heard that the demands of the crowds coming and going around Jesus and his disciples were so great that they didn’t even have time to eat. Jesus was concerned about his disciples and also for the crowds and if we were to read on in the chapter we would see how Jesus met the need for food for everyone. But for now we are thinking of rushing and resting. The disciples had been dong plenty of rushing and eagerly reporting back to Jesus all they had been doing and his response to all their busyness was ‘Come with me, by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest’.

I wonder how many of us at sometimes in our lives would have loved someone saying those words to us.

Jesus was not only concerned for the needs of His disciples but as He looked at the crowds who had followed them, as they went to a solitary place – it says Jesus had compassion on them for they were like sheep without a shepherd and that’s when He began teaching them many things – and following that the big picnic took place.

We are not told what Jesus taught them (but we are told what they ate) but I wonder if He taught them using words we can read in Matthews gospel about not worrying but being aware that God our heavenly Father knows what we need – did He tell them He was the Good Shepherd who cares for His sheep – He certainly put His compassion and concern for them into action as not only were they fed – but later at the end of our reading we find Jesus healing all who touched Him.

Let’s pause there with a picture of crowds pressing around Jesus, no doubt it was noisy, hot, dusty and maybe the disciples were trying to keep some order (stop pushing, keep calm etc.) this picture speaks of chaos as desperate people tried to touch Jesus.

No wonder there were times when the gospels tell us that Jesus went off into the hills (at night even) to pray – to be quiet with His heavenly Father.

So we ask ourselves if Jesus needed to do that surely we do too. Time to be quiet not necessarily actively praying; just being aware of God and His love for us.

I love the verse which says ‘Be still and know that I am God’- but it’s not always easy to be still – to do what seems like nothing !! when much needs doing – yet in these days of uncertainty about so many things we do need times of quiet – to be at peace; so what do we need in order to do just that?

The absence of noise can help and a sense of peace in our relationship with God knowing He cares; that He is indeed our Good Shepherd; that our sin is forgiven and our eternal home is in heaven. We might also need to remind ourselves that it is ok to step aside sometimes from all the pressures which are put upon us by others or maybe our own expectations of keeping a perfect house – with no dust anywhere!!

Yes sometimes we need to re-evaluate what we do and why and be aware it is ok to meet our own needs for rest and relaxation because then we are better placed to help others, and we do this with the love and grace we have received from our Lord and Saviour through the work of the Holy Spirit as we rest in His presence.

**Prayer of Confession**

Gracious God forgive us if we fail to make time to rest in your presence. Sometimes as we rush around doing your work we forget to spend time just being with you. We are sorry if our lives get so full we leave you out forgive us Lord and help us to slow down – to make space for you to dwell within our hearts – help us to get the right rhythm in our lives that is in tune with you – thankyou that as we come seeking your forgiveness and grace you assure us that we are forgiven and can be refreshed and renewed in your presence to serve you as we seek to serve others. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

**Intercessions (Duty Elder)**

**Shine share**

**Hymn 362 Jesus I am resting…**

Jesus, I am resting, resting,

in the joy of what Thou art;

I am finding out the greatness

of Thy loving heart.

Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee,

and Thy beauty fills my soul,

for, by Thy transforming power,

Thou hast made me whole.

*Jesus, I am resting, resting,*

*in the joy of what Thou art;*

*I am finding out the greatness*

*of Thy loving heart.*

O how great Thy loving-kindness,

vaster, broader than the sea!

O how marvellous Thy goodness,

lavished all on me!

Yes, I rest in Thee, Beloved,

know what wealth of grace is Thine,

know Thy certainty of promise,

and have made it mine.

*Jesus, I am resting* ...

Simply trusting Thee, Lord Jesus,

I behold Thee as Thou art;

and Thy love so pure, so changeless,

satisfies my heart.

Satisfies its deepest longings,

meets, supplies its every need,

compasseth me round with blessings;

Thine is love indeed.

*Jesus, I am resting* …

Ever lift Thy face upon me,

as I work and wait for Thee;

resting 'neath Thy smile, Lord Jesus,

earth's dark shadows flee.

Brightness of my Father's glory,

sunshine of my Father's face,

keep me ever trusting, resting,

fill me with Thy grace.

*Jesus, I am resting* ...

Jean Sophia Pigott (1845-82) CCLI 150801

**Say the Grace together**

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all evermore. Amen