

Service for October 2020

“For such a time as this”

175 Here I am to worship https://youtu.be/g5hN_m55uoM

Let us give thanks to the lord for he is good. His Love endures forever.
[Psalm 136]

Hymn: 470 Lord for the years <https://youtu.be/MkTrFQLy6js>

Prayer:

Father, we praise you because each day is filled with new things, and is a chance to make a new start.
We thank you that each day has its times of learning new things and changing the way things have been.
We thank you that each day brings a new chance to know Jesus, an opportunity to put him at the heart of our lives.
We praise you that each day gives us new reasons to thank him and new ways to serve in his name.
Forgive us when we do not want to change or be changed.
Forgive us when we settle for second best and we forget to be thankful for all you have done and all you have given us.
Make us new, for Jesus' sake. Amen. [David Clowes]

Address:

The Bible is full of stories of people who heard God's call and obeyed for a purpose in such a time as they were needed by the people around them.

We have all heard about Noah who started to build his ark before the rains began to fall and the floods came. At such a time as this God called a skilled man and his family to build a floating ark so that all of creation would not be destroyed.

Then there was Abraham journeying to an unknown new land, to start a dynasty. Or Moses leading the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land; they all obeyed God for such a time as this.

Then there were the prophets who reminded the people of the need for faith in the one true God. Men like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Micah and Habakkuk all with a powerful message from God to his people for such a time as this.

You may have noticed that all these people were men. I would like us to think of two women who were called by God at such a time of need and purpose.

The first woman has a book of the Bible named after her and for her courage is remembered annually by the Jewish people in the Festival of Purim.

It is a time of great joy and celebration. Her name was **Esther**. Her story can be found between the books of **Nehemiah** and **Job** in the Old Testament. It is well worth a read, just 10 chapters, when you have time to sit and think about her life.

Esther was a beautiful Jewish woman, who won a beauty contest, thus catching the eye of the Persian King Xerxes. She was just one of his wives, and had to wait until he wished to see her. Esther lived under the guardianship of her cousin Mordecai, who overheard a plot to kill the king.....

Haman is newly promoted and expects Mordecai to bow before him. As a devout Jew, Mordecai cannot do this. He will only bow down to God. Haman plots to destroy the Jews. The king does not know that Esther is a Jew.

Esther is shown by her cousin that it is up to her to save her people. That she was born for such a time as this. She has a role to play at a risk to herself and a purpose to her life.

I'll leave you to discover the full story when you read the Book of Esther. You might also like to discover about the Jewish **Festival of Purim**.

The second woman is **Mary** and her life is recorded in the New Testament, especially in the Gospels. We think about her in Advent and at Christmas and she was born for such a time as this.

When we read about the annunciation in Nazareth and birth in Bethlehem, I wonder if we realise just what a risk she took. She was going about her daily life, perhaps fetching water or washing clothes or cleaning the house where she lived when an angel told her she was chosen to carry a baby the Saviour of the world. Quite a daunting prospect!

Mary was engaged to Joseph a carpenter. This was not just a promise of marriage but a firm commitment. If when she told Joseph she was pregnant, he abandoned her Mary could / would have been accused of adultery a crime punishable with death by stoning. He didn't because he was specially chosen too.

Then there was that journey to Bethlehem and giving birth in a stable. Yet she accepted the challenges, the purposes, her calling for such a time as this.

What about us for such a time as this. We live in very strange and worrying times. We the Church; the living stones, not the stones or bricks and mortar of the buildings, what is our calling, our purpose?

God was with all the people we have thought about in this service. He is with us in our daily lives. May we feel his presence and his love surrounding us as we listen for the whisper of his call. Amen.

Hymn: 415 The Church of Christ <https://youtu.be/kHRI-wez1DY>

Personal Prayer:

Gracious God, how can I serve you?
Where does my ministry lie?
There are so many jobs not done,
so many tasks that seem too large, too difficult, too frightening for me.

What are my gifts, God?
What tools have you given me that I might use to serve you?

Am I serving you now as you would wish?
Or do I have a long way to go?
Show me a sign in the midst of my confusion.
Put the writing on the wall.

Which of my experiences do you wish me to use?
Who amongst my friends should I ask for advice?
Do I make up excuses to avoid serving you?
Do I ignore the doors that you open?
Can I change anything?

I feel so weak, God.
Yet, I know that you will give me the gifts I need to do your work.
Because you love me, you will never ask too much of me.

Help me to hold fast to your promises as I continue my journey with you.
Amen. [Rev. M. Youngson]

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: 410 Lord your Church on earth <https://youtu.be/e77x9gVYW2A>

A Blessing:

Dear Father,
Where we are cold and in darkness warm and brighten us.
Where we are forgetful of our calling remind and refresh us.
Where we have lost hope revive and restore us.
Where we have lost our way find us and set us once again on the path of life.

Anchor us, Lord God, and keep us firmly fixed in the depth of your love.
Amen.

Hymns from Singing the Faith.

Maureen Crilley.