



Western Fells Methodist Circuit

**22 November 2020**

**by  
Keith Rushton**

Our call to worship.....Jesus is our rock, our shield and our salvation.

Consider the following words by Charles Wesley [StF169] Music [here](#)

Come thou long expected Jesus,	Born thy people to deliver,
Born to set thy people free,	Born a child and yet a King,
From our fears and sins release us,	Born to reign in us for ever,
Let us find our rest in Thee.	Now thy gracious kingdom bring.

Let us pray:

Loving God, please be sunrise in our hearts today. Make everything bright and new for us. Drive away the shadows of discouragement and loneliness. Outfit us with joy and excitement. Let your love and forgiveness overcome all our wrongs, doubts and anxieties. Let today be one of great blessing for us. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen. PAUSE..... THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Gospel reading is St Matthew chapter 25 verses 34 to 40.

<sup>34</sup>Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; <sup>35</sup>for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup>I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' <sup>37</sup>Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? <sup>38</sup>And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? <sup>39</sup>And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' <sup>40</sup>And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

**The key message is in verses 34-36. THEN the King will say “the Kingdom is prepared for you for I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, you looked after me, you visited me.** Sometimes the stories in Matthew 25 are called parables of judgement. But they are not parables in the conventional sense. Here we have a poetic description of what Jesus says about the end of time. Here is the **only** gospel reference to the Son of man as **KING**. The Matthew 25 passage is about time passing and moving towards how things will be. Verse 34 starts with the word “**THEN**”. Some scholars see this word “then” as relating to the day when everything will have to be accounted for. The concept was hard to understand.

“I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink...I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me”. Those hearing the message said “we don’t get it, when did we do all this?” The King [Jesus] replies “whatever you did for one of these the least of these my brothers, you did it for me.” It is about the importance of our actions in serving others.

Billy is one of my ministry friends. He was asked to visit a little English girl who was in hospital in the USA for unique treatment for a rare illness which was unavailable in England. My friend says he went with some trepidation. “The first time I stepped into her room I saw Rebecca in bed with many tubes and shunts attached to her. Before I could introduce myself, this sick girl greeted me with the question “why did the hedgehog cross the road?”

Billy says, “I was totally taken aback. Anyway, I was able to pull myself together even though I didn’t even know what a hedgehog was! I was amazed that this suffering child was ready to break the ice with a joke. Quickly. I said, “I don’t know Rebecca, why did the hedgehog cross the road?” “To get to the other side, silly”. She had no fear!

She introduced him to Father Christmas because she thought Americans would only understand “Santa”. She told Billy she loved the song “walking in the air, I’m holding very tight, I’m riding in the midnight blue” from “Snowman”. Would she walk in the air when she was better? There was wonderful banter between Pastor and child.

The church was so inspired by Rebecca’s bravery that they established a trust fund to meet living expenses for her and her parents and young brother. A temporary home was provided free where the family could rest and recuperate and be together following her discharge from hospital. Wonderful care was given by Pastor and congregation as an enactment of the gospel “inasmuch as you did it for Rebecca, you did it unto me.” She did not walk in the air to get home to England. It was Christmas Eve when this five year old died in Savannah and passed into the arms of Jesus. However, Pastor Billy says “the English girl who battled with illness and welcomed me with a joke continues to touch people’s lives.”

I sometimes think the pandemic and lockdown is giving me Departure Gate Paralysis. Have you ever experienced it at the airport? This is what happens:

you take loved ones to the airport to see them off on a long journey and after they disappear air-side, you still want to linger. It is a strange feeling because even though you know the plane will take off soon, you don't feel like going home. That is Departure Gate Paralysis. But Matthew 25 verse 40 is a distinct calling to act **NOW**. When we are called to live "the gospel of the inasmuch", we must break out of Departure Gate Paralysis. **AMEN**.

Consider these words by Sue McClellan, John Paculabo & Keith Rycroft StF 167  
Music [here](#)

Colours of day dawn into the mind,  
The sun has come up, the night is behind,  
Go down in the city, into the street,  
And let's give the message to the people we meet.

*So light up the fire and let the flame burn,  
Open the door let Jesus return.  
Take seeds of his spirit, let the fruit grow,  
Tell the people of Jesus, let his love show.*

Let us pray.

Loving God, we seek your healing blessings now for our nation and the world. We lift up to you, all people laid low by the virus, tired doctors, nurses and carers. We pray for the new treatments and vaccines to be safe and effective in saving lives. We pray for our friends and relatives who are being cared for because of other illnesses. We pray for anxious families who will be separated by distances great and small this year as we approach Christmas. Through the coming season of Advent, let your flame burn in our hearts. Encourage us all and give us strength to cope.

Lord, we now lift up to you the loved ones we have concerns for .....  
Give comfort to the lonely and peace to troubled hearts. Give us all confidence for the future.

Touch our lives now O Lord. Teach us to see beyond the limits of yesterday's vision, care beyond the boundaries of today's caring and have faith beyond the scope the faith we have declared so far in our lives. We pray for the light of the world to shine in our lives as never before.

The Lord Bless you and all your loved ones, keep you safe and give you peace today and always. Amen.