

This, and all other Broadway 'virtual services' since Easter, are available online at <https://urcwalsall.uk/virtual-church.html> .



## Service for the 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2021

*A warm welcome to all who share in worship with us today.*

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Come, people of God, let us offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving and lift up his name in the presence of his people. For God is gracious and merciful, full of compassion and love. While we were still helpless, he came to save us.

The Lord harkens to our call, listening to our pleas and hearing our prayers! We will praise God, who gives rest to our souls!

In the courts of the house of the Lord, in the presence of all God's people, we acknowledge our faith.

We will call on the Lord as long as we live! We are your servant, O God; you have loosed our bonds! We will offer sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving!

How shall we repay the Lord for all we have been given? We will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord!

**Amen.**

HYMN: Father, I place into your hands

*If you would like to **listen to this hymn**, click the icon on the webpage or the link below:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBfRNrvvUfc>

PRAYERS of thanksgiving & confession

*Let us pray*

Dear Lord, we are your hands, your feet and your voice. Help us to use all that we have in a positive and supportive way in furtherance of our service to you.

Your word to us is the good news of Jesus Christ. Yet too often our words to others may not carry your news. Words can be used in a boastful, harsh and critical way.

Forgive us O Lord for the times when your words may have been used inappropriately or insensitively. Help us to choose our words carefully and faithfully, and to use them for the promotion of your word.

We give thanks for the world around us, for the opportunities that we have, for the power of communication with others and by the example given to us by your son Jesus Christ.

We ask these things in Jesus' name.

**Amen.**

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;  
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.  
Amen.**

## SCRIPTURE READING

Mark 8: 27-38

<sup>27</sup> Then Jesus and his disciples went away to the villages near Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Tell me, who do people say I am?"

<sup>28</sup> "Some say that you are John the Baptist," they answered; "others say that you are Elijah, while others say that you are one of the prophets."

<sup>29</sup> "What about you?" he asked them. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."

<sup>30</sup> Then Jesus ordered them, "Do not tell anyone about me."

<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus began to teach his disciples: "The Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law. He will be put to death, but three days later he will rise to life." <sup>32</sup> He made this very clear to them. So Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup> But Jesus turned around, looked at his disciples, and rebuked Peter. "Get away from me, Satan," he said. "Your thoughts don't come from God but from human nature!"

<sup>34</sup> Then Jesus called the crowd and his disciples to him. "If any of you want to come with me," he told them, "you must forget yourself, carry your cross, and follow me." <sup>35</sup> For if you want to save your own life, you will lose it; but if you lose your life for me and for the gospel, you will save it. <sup>36</sup> Do you gain anything if you win the whole world but lose your life? Of course not! <sup>37</sup> There is nothing you can give to regain your life. <sup>38</sup> If you are ashamed of me and of my teaching in this godless and wicked day, then the Son of Man will be ashamed of you when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

James 3: 1-12

<sup>1</sup> My friends, not many of you should become teachers. As you know, we teachers will be judged with greater strictness than others. <sup>2</sup> All of us often make mistakes. But if a person never makes a mistake in what he says, he is perfect and is also able to control his whole being. <sup>3</sup> We put a bit into the mouth of a horse to make it obey us, and we are able to make it go where we want. <sup>4</sup> Or think of a ship: big as it is and driven by such strong winds, it can be steered by a very small rudder, and it goes wherever the pilot wants it to go. <sup>5</sup> So it is with the tongue: small as it is, it can boast about great things.

Just think how large a forest can be set on fire by a tiny flame! <sup>6</sup> And the tongue is like a fire. It is a world of wrong, occupying its place in our bodies and spreading evil through our whole being. It sets on fire the entire course of our existence with the fire that comes to it

from hell itself. <sup>7</sup> We humans are able to tame and have tamed all other creatures—wild animals and birds, reptiles and fish. <sup>8</sup> But no one has ever been able to tame the tongue. It is evil and uncontrollable, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup> We use it to give thanks to our Lord and Father and also to curse other people, who are created in the likeness of God. <sup>10</sup> Words of thanksgiving and cursing pour out from the same mouth. My friends, this should not happen! <sup>11</sup> No spring of water pours out sweet water and bitter water from the same opening. <sup>12</sup> A fig tree, my friends, cannot bear olives; a grapevine cannot bear figs, nor can a salty spring produce sweet water.

*Thanks be to God.*

HYMN: Be Thou my vision

*If you would like to sing this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;  
naught be all else to me, save that thou art—  
thou my best thought in the day and the night,  
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

2 Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word;  
thou ever with me and I with thee, Lord;  
thou my great Father, thy child let me be;  
thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

3. Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight.  
Be thou my dignity, thou my delight,  
thou my soul's shelter, and thou my strong tower.  
Raise thou me heav'nward, great Power of my  
power.

4 Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,  
thou mine inheritance, now and always:  
thou and thou only, the first in my heart,  
High King of heaven, my treasure thou art.

5 High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright sun,  
grant me its joys after vict'ry is won;  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

*Ancient Irish, tr Mary Byrne & Eleanor Hull*

ADDRESS: *Mrs Lynn Levesley*

Today's second reading is referred to as 'The Taming of the Tongue' in some places.

The tongue is such a small part of the human body, yet it is capable of causing much joy and much damage and distress in equal measures. The power of words both spoken and written must not be underestimated. My Dad would say from time to time "It's better sometimes to stay silent and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and prove it". I like that one. Our words can sometimes be interpreted by others as an indication of our abilities, our knowledge, and, potentially, our prejudices.

In the words of a popular song by Cher "Words are like weapons, they wound sometimes". They certainly can and undoubtedly do. The spoken word, spoken in jest, spoken in times of anger or at times of pressure and stress, can never be taken back. Words on social media have over recent years caused untold anguish and upset – and even lead to suicide; all highly regrettable and avoidable. Words are indeed capable of many things.

Author Deborah Tannen said “Words can be like weapons of destruction: it takes so much effort and the cooperation of so many people to build something – and so little effort of so few to tear it down.” Maya Angelou on the same subject said ““Words are things. You must be careful, careful about calling people out of their names, using racial pejoratives and sexual pejoratives and all that ignorance. Don’t do that! Some day we’ll be able to measure the power of words. I think they are things. They get on the walls. They get in your wallpaper. They get in your rugs, in your upholstery, and your clothes, and finally into you.”

Just a few examples of the power of our tongue and the impact of our words. I, for one, would say that the playground chant “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words shall never hurt me” cannot be further from the truth.

James chapter 3 verses 1 to 12 begins with a stern warning to those who teach and then proceeds to a set of pronouncements – almost a tirade – of how the human tongue is dangerous and evil; that inevitably it does more harm than good, and that our only hope is to some extent keep it under control. There are two stand-out metaphors in verse 3-7. Each explores a different aspect of the tongue, which is itself a metaphor for the power of human speech.

The first metaphor is the guiding of a horse with a bridle. The rider of the horse – or indeed the chariot rider – directs the strength, speed and direction of the horse (much larger than the rider himself) by means of a bit in the horse’s mouth. The bit functions by pressing against the animal’s tongue. Quite literally, the one who is able to control the horse’s tongue is able to control the animal’s whole body.

The second metaphor refers to a sea captain, a rudder and a ship. The captain who is able to keep control of the rudder, like the person able to keep control of the tongue, can weather difficult circumstances and emerge intact and on course.

Bits and rudders are of course just tools, unlike the human tongue which according to James is not simply a tool to be utilised but an agent which can sometimes take on a life of its own. I do not think that James’ sole intention here is to paint a gloomy picture of an evil, wayward tongue capable of nothing but sadness and destruction. In fact, the latter part of the reading (verses 9-12) opens up new metaphors. We give thanks with our tongues and our voices, we give praise, support and forgiveness in the same way.

Ultimately, James calls on us all as Christians to examine ourselves closely: an examination focussing largely on the words that come out of our mouths to determine who we truly are.

Perhaps we can control that unruly tongue after all. But to do so we require constant attention to who we are and what God has made us to be.

PRAYERS of intercession

*Let us pray*

Dear Lord, be with us now as we come to you with our prayers of intercession.

We thank you for your world and for all the contrasts and the wonders that we see. Help us to protect our environment and to value it for all that it brings.

We pray for those who suffer poverty, famine and internal struggle. In particular today, we think of those in Afghanistan. Be with those people as they struggle to come to terms with anguish that they are facing. We pray for those who seek to help them: armed forces, emergency services and aid workers. Help us to support them in whatever way we can to bring justice and peace to those who suffer.

Lord, we pray for the world leaders and politicians. Guide them in their decision making. Help them promote fairness and unity for everyone.

Closer to home, we pray for – and give thanks for – our health workers, our public servants and our emergency services who continue to work tirelessly to support us in these difficult times.

We think of our young people as they return to school and for those who are commencing university and college courses, some moving away from home for the first time. Be with them all and may they feel your love and blessings.

We pray for our volunteers, of whom there are many, who work tirelessly both locally and nationally behind the scenes to support our homeless, our addicted and our most vulnerable members of society. We pray in particular this morning for those who work at the Glebe Centre.

We pray for all our religious communities here in Walsall. Help us to learn from each other and to work together to promote unity amongst all.

We pray for those in particular need at this time.....

Finally we pray for ourselves, our families and our friends. We look to you for guidance. We seek to follow your example. Be with us now and always.

Lord, in your name we pray.

**Amen.**

HYMN: Take my life

*If you would like to **sing** this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

1 Take my life and let it be  
consecrated, Lord, to thee.  
Take my moments and my days;  
let them flow in endless praise.

2 Take my hands and let them move  
at the impulse of thy love.  
Take my feet and let them be  
swift and beautiful for thee.

3 Take my voice and let me sing  
always, only, for my King.  
Take my lips and let them be  
filled with messages from thee.

4 Take my silver and my gold;  
not a mite would I withhold.  
Take my intellect and use  
every power as thou shalt choose.

5 Take my will and make it thine;  
it shall be no longer mine.  
Take my heart it is thine own;  
it shall be thy royal throne.

6 Take my love; my Lord, I pour  
at thy feet its treasure store.  
Take myself, and I will be  
ever, only, all for thee.

Frances Havergal

THE GRACE

*Let us pray*

**The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all, evermore.**

**Amen.**