



The Central Norfolk Methodist Circuit

Sunday 11th January 2026: 1st in ordinary time

Theme for today is "Not to be served but to serve"

Prepared by Avril Temple – Local Preacher



Opening sentences Isaiah 42: 1-3

Look at my servant whom I have strengthened. He is my chosen who pleases me. I have put my spirit upon him. He will bring justice to the nations. He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle. He will bring justice to all who have been wronged.

Hymn 34 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytBTMrOK_I

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
with gold of obedience and incense of lowliness,
kneel and adore him the Lord is his name.

Low at his feet lay your burden of carefulness,
high on his heart he will bear it for you,
comfort your sorrows and answer your prayerfulness,
guiding your steps in the way that is true.

Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness
of the poor wealth you would count as your own;
truth in its beauty and love in its tenderness
these are the offerings to bring to his throne.

These, though we bring them in trembling and
fearfulness,
he will accept for the name that is dear;
mornings of joy give for evenings of tearfulness,
trust for our trembling and hope for our fear.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
with gold of obedience and incense of lowliness,
kneel and adore him the Lord is his name.

Prayer

Eternal God, we come to worship you, praise you and thank you for all your blessings to us. For your gift of Jesus Christ to be with us each and every day. As we have celebrated Christmas may we remember all those who, for many different reasons find it a difficult time. May each and every one know your presence near. We praise and thank you for your loving and caring. **Amen.**

Loving God we are sorry for the mistakes and errors we have made, the opportunities we have missed when we should have spoken up for you. Forgive us for on your forgiveness we depend. Amen.

Hymn 394 Spirit of God, unseen as the wind. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ozWAspk5Zcg>

*Spirit of God, unseen as the wind,
gentle as is the dove;
teach us the truth and help us believe,
show us the Saviour's love!*

You spoke to us long, long ago,
gave us the written word;
we read it still, needing its truth
through it God's voice is heard.

*Spirit of God, unseen as the wind,
gentle as is the dove;
teach us the truth and help us believe,
show us the Saviour's love!*

Without your help we fail our Lord,
we cannot live His way;
we need Your power, we need Your strength,
following Christ each day.

*Spirit of God, unseen as the wind,
gentle as is the dove;
teach us the truth and help us believe,
show us the Saviour's love!*

Bible reading – Matthew 3: 13-17

Reflection

At the beginning of chapter 3 Matthew introduces us to John the Baptist in some detail from his clothing, his diet and, most importantly his message. 'Repent, the kingdom of heaven is coming.' John was the person of whom Isaiah wrote 'the voice of someone crying in the desert. Prepare the way that the Lord will take, straighten out his paths.'

And then we meet Jesus. The Jesus in Matthew's gospel we have only known as a baby in a manger, a baby fleeing to Egypt from the wrath of Herod, who is seeking to destroy all the Jewish baby boys. Now he is a grown man who has already made a start on his earthly ministry, following his destiny.

John was a very popular and charismatic speaker, and many people came to hear him, seeking forgiveness and being baptised in the river Jordan. I expect that Jesus had to push his way through the crowd to reach John. John must have been surprised to see him. He seems to know that Jesus is the one he has been speaking about, the one he's been waiting for, and then Jesus asks to be baptised. John finds himself in a quandary, surely, he is the one who should be baptised by Jesus, not the other way round.

In Luke 3 we read that John had said he was not worthy even to undo the straps of the sandals of the one who was coming, the promised Messiah. Jesus replied, 'It should be done for we must carry out all that God requires.' So yes, Jesus is going to fulfil God's plan. The promises made have not been forgotten. If Jesus is going to do all this, he must do it by identifying himself with God's people. He must live their lives with all the ups and downs, in the end dying their death for their sakes.

What good will all this do? How will it bring about the results that John and his many followers were longing for. They will be able to follow Jesus on his earthly journey to its conclusion with his death on the cross to save everyone. Some will hear of his rising from the dead and ascending into heaven to return to his Father. And so, the great story continued. We need to read the gospels to learn more of all he said and did and find our path to follow.

There is a glimpse of what Jesus' life will be like as he comes out of the water at his baptism. A dove appears and a voice is heard from heaven saying, 'This is my dearly beloved son who brings me great joy.' The dove here symbolizes what Jesus'; role will be. He will not be warlike or vindictive. His way will be the way of peace, accepting and asking everyone to be part of God's kingdom on earth.

Jesus came to fulfil God's plan, not ours and many times this caused misunderstanding during his time on earth and even now. He doesn't do what we expect, he surprises us again and again. We need to learn to listen carefully to what he says and watch what he is doing with eyes and hearts wide open. Putting our own plans aside may we glimpse the loving Father and find ourselves equipped with His spirit so that our lives may be made ready for use in his work. Do we miss opportunities because we are too familiar with the Jesus we know and fail to see where he is pointing? Do we have the faith to change direction and follow where he is leading?

May God deepen our faith. May we know Him fully, put self aside and follow where he leads.

Hymn 272: From Heaven You Came, helpless babe

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4963QPHAIM>

From Heaven, You came helpless babe
Entered our world, your glory veiled
Not to be served but to serve
And give Your life that we might live

*This is our God, The Servant King
He calls us now to follow Him
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to The Servant King*

There in the garden of tears
My heavy load he chose to bear
His heart with sorrow was torn
"Yet not My will but Yours", He said

This is our God, The Servant King

Come see His hands and His feet
The scars that speak of sacrifice
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails surrendered

This is our God, The Servant King

So let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthroned Him
Each other's needs to prefer
For it is Christ we're serving

This is our God, The Servant King

Prayers for others

Loving God, we have just celebrated your birth, and we bring to you the 'have-nots' of our world, lacking the essentials of life, trapped in poverty, worn down by the pressures of everyday life. We take so much for granted: food, clean water, homes, medical supplies, education, families and friends. Hear our prayers.

Loving God, we have sung our carols proclaiming the birth of the Prince of Peace, but when we look round at our world today there seems little peace and goodwill. We pray for rulers of all nations, may they listen to the needs of others, including their own people. Also, for countries worn down by huge debts. Swap rhetoric for listening and demands for peaceful solutions. May they come to the realisation that being the biggest, the most powerful, is not the answer. Instead, may the way forward involve empathy, compassion and a deep sense of caring. Hear our prayers.

Forgive us for our part in a society that has too often lived for today with no thought of tomorrow. Help us to live less wastefully. Challenge the hearts and minds of people everywhere so that we all may understand the fragility of your world and so honour our calling to be faithful stewards of it all.

Hear our prayers, Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Offering

Hymn 693: Beauty for Brokenness https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5_TVy2gHRg

Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair,
Lord, in your suffering world this is our prayer.
Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace,
sunrise to sunset your kingdom increase.

Shelter for fragile lives, cures for their ills,
work for the craftsmen, trade for their skills,
land for the dispossessed, rights for the weak,
voices to plead the cause of those who can't speak.

*God of the poor, friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray:
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain;
come, change our love
from a spark to a flame.*

Refuge from cruel wars, havens from fear,
cities for sanctuary, freedoms to share,
peace to the killing fields, scorched earth to green,
Christ for the bitterness, his cross for the pain.

Rest for the ravaged earth, oceans and streams,
plundered and poisoned, our future, our dreams,
Lord end our madness, carelessness, greed,
make us content with the things that we need.

God of the poor...

Lighten our darkness, breathe on this flame
until your justice burns brightly again,
until the nations learn of your ways,
seek your salvation and bring you their praise.

God of the poor...

Blessing:

God of surprises, go with us now and open our hearts to meet you in every aspect of life, even when we least expect it and where we might not think to look.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, hear our prayer.