

***“Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.”*** Psalm 1: 1 - 3

Dear Friends,

In my letter last week I suggested that using the Psalms was a useful tool for developing your connection with God through prayer. The words quoted above are the very first words from the Book of Psalms and I want to use them to help me explore the third theme in the “Methodist Way of Life,” *“We will look and listen for God in Scripture, and the world.”*

I have written over the last couple of weeks of the Christian life as a relationship. As we seek to demonstrate our Christian life through expressions of learning, caring, service and evangelism, we find that our souls need to be nourished at a deep, relational level to sustain us as we look out into the world.

There are many “means of grace” that can help to feed and nourish us but if we do not pray, if we do not worship, if we do not look for God’s presence and activity through Scripture and in the world, then our souls will rapidly dry up. Rather than being like a tree planted by a stream which yields fruit when it is supposed to and whose leaf does not wither – without prayer, worship, the study of Scripture, and the search for God we become more akin to how Psalm 1 goes on to picture those who turn away from the search for God – *“They are like chaff that the wind blows away!”* They have become separated from the branches, trunk and roots that connect us to the water of life that God longs for us to drink in, they have become dry and withered and produce no fruit.

So, I wonder, how do you search for God? What tools do you use? In our society today there are all sorts of religions and as many different forms of spirituality. There has been a massive explosion of resources available to people who want to connect at a deeper level with something outside of themselves. Just go into any book shop and look for the “Religion” section and you will find a confusing and overwhelming mix of philosophies, belief systems, self-help tools, New Age spiritualities, meditation techniques, and lifestyle gurus competing for your attention.

But the Methodist Way of Life is quite specific in where it encourages us to look for God – in Scripture, and in the world. John Calvin, the great Protestant Reformer, once suggested that Scripture is the lens through which we view the world. Life can be a very confusing and overwhelming journey if we have nothing to root us or keep us grounded in God’s presence. The meta-narrative or “big picture” view of Scripture is

that God is the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of all life and that in God's wisdom and timing, God is working to make all things new – to mend the brokenness, to transform the ugliness, to restore the goodness.

When we live from that perspective, then we can come to understand our daily lives as being opportunities to partner with God in that redemptive, transformative work. We can look out at the world and see the possibilities and opportunities. We can take time to notice the good stuff. As Paul counsels us in Philippians 4: 8 *“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.”* Where we see such things, there we can know and trust that God is active.

But that does not mean that we choose to ignore all the bad stuff. After all that is where transformation and restoration is most needed. In Colossians 3:12 Paul challenges us as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved to: *“clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”*

A life that is rooted in God, that searches for God in Scripture and in the world, that celebrates goodness and partners in it with God, is also a life which lives the life of God. Elsewhere Paul talks about us being *“in Christ”* or *“clothed in Christ.”* It is through developing that relationship in the depths of our souls through our practice of prayer, worship and searching for God in Scripture and the world, that we come to regularly put on the garments of life in Christ and wear them out into the world as we partner with God in God's work of making all things new – mending the brokenness, transforming the ugliness, restoring the goodness! It is through developing that inner, soulful life that we find the nourishment and power to care for, serve, and share our faith with those around us.

So, keep your eyes open for signs of God's presence as you spend time in Scripture and take it with you into the world you inhabit.

Every blessing,

Rev Tim

## **Notices**

## **Worship Services**

The Circuit Ministers, in consultation with the Local Preachers' Meeting have reviewed the decision made at the start of the month about closing our church buildings for communal worship (except for funerals) and have agreed that we should extend this decision through to the end of Feb, to be reviewed after half-term. Therefore, for the time being, opportunities to share in worship will continue to be provided either through live zoom services, pre-recorded services on youtube or in hard copy form for those

who cannot access virtual platforms. Further details of resources to help you worship at home can be found on the Circuit website: [www.wandamethodists.org.uk](http://www.wandamethodists.org.uk)

## Quiz

The Social Justice Team at Burley are going to be hosting a zoom quiz on Sat 6<sup>th</sup> Feb. The quiz will start promptly at 7pm and will help raise funds for the church's charity – The Burley-Tereli Friendship Trust. They would be delighted to welcome any friends from around the circuit to take part. The link copied below can be used to access the quiz. For those not able to use zoom, there will also be a hard copy version which can be emailed or posted out. If you would like to receive a copy please email Rev Tim. Donations for taking part can be made via online banking to Burley in Wharfedale Methodist Church. Acc. No. 60118036. Sort Code: 20-11-81. Please use the reference "Church Charity." Alternatively, cheques can be made out to Burley in Wharfedale Methodist Church and posted to Rev Tim.

Topic: Burley Quiz

Time: Feb 6, 2021 07:00 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85755364823?pwd=TkhoN0VGcUg2dkNnV1dpU2ZSYXRqUT09>

Meeting ID: 857 5536 4823

Passcode: 044903

Dial by your location

+44 203 481 5237 United Kingdom

+44 203 481 5240 United Kingdom

+44 203 901 7895 United Kingdom

+44 131 460 1196 United Kingdom

+44 203 051 2874 United Kingdom

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kdDebnZHy0>