

## CIRCUIT SERVICE

13 March 2022 — Second Sunday in Lent

THEME            **SUCH LOVE**

1<sup>ST</sup> HYMN        357 StF     Jesus , the name high over all.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3Jpx0Rnmno>

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| <p>1    Jesus — the name high over all,<br/>      in hell, or earth, or sky !<br/>      Angels revere, and nations fall,<br/>      and devils fear and fly.</p> <p>2    Jesus — the name to sinners dear,<br/>      the name to sinners given !<br/>      It scatters all their guilty fear,<br/>      it turns their hell to heaven.</p> <p>3    Jesus — the prisoner's fetters breaks,<br/>      and bruises Satan's head ;<br/>      power into strengthless souls it speaks,<br/>      and life into the dead.</p> | <p>4    O that the world might taste and see<br/>      the riches of his grace !<br/>      The arms of love that compass me<br/>      would all the earth embrace.</p> <p>5    His only righteousness I show,<br/>      his saving grace proclaim ;<br/>      'tis all my business here below<br/>      to cry : 'Behold the Lamb !'</p> <p>6    Happy if with my latest breath<br/>      I might but gasp his name ;<br/>      preach him to all, and cry in death :<br/>      'Behold, behold the Lamb !'</p> <p>Charles Wesley (1707–1788)</p> |
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### PRAYER

Let us praise the Lord God.

Praise him for his acts of power.

Praise him for his surpassing greatness.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures for ever.

We offer you our praise and thanks.

In your presence, we are aware of our failings.

We call to mind the ways in which we have fallen short in the past week.

We humbly seek your forgiveness.

In your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen

### MEDITATION

The psalmist writes:

"He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge." (Psalm 91:4)

It is not unknown after a fire to find a dead hen with live chicks under her wings. An article in National Geographic several years ago provided an interesting picture of God's wings. After a forest fire in Yellowstone National Park, forest rangers began their trek up a mountain to assess the inferno's damage.

One ranger found a bird literally petrified in ashes, perched statuesquely on the ground at the base of a tree. Somewhat sickened by the eerie sight, he carefully knocked over the bird with a stick. When he gently struck it, 3 tiny chicks scurried from under their dead mother's wings. The loving mother bird, keenly aware of impending disaster, had carried her offspring to the base of the tree

and had gathered them under her wings, instinctively knowing that the toxic smoke would rise. She could have flown to safety but had refused to abandon her babies. Then the blaze had arrived & the heat had scorched her small body, but the mother hen had remained steadfast. Because she had been willing to die, those under the cover of her wings would live.

I seem to recall seeing the same thing on a TV nature programme not so very many years ago.

"He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge." (Psalm 91:4)

You might like to take a few moments now, or later in the day, to ponder this story. The psalmist knew of it all those centuries ago and there are those who have witnessed it in recent times. The Psalmist saw a parallel between the hen bird and God. We shall see in our Gospel reading that Jesus identifies himself with this kind of love. In a few weeks on Good Friday we shall be reminded again of Jesus' sacrifice for us.

2<sup>ND</sup> HYMN 403 StF God is love: his the care.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gjju\\_BKA1PE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gjju_BKA1PE)

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| <p>1 God is love : his the care,<br/>tending each, everywhere.<br/>God is love — all is there !<br/>Jesus came to show him,<br/>that we all might know him :<br/><i>Sing aloud, loud, loud !</i><br/><i>Sing aloud, loud, loud !</i><br/><i>God is good !</i><br/><i>God is truth !</i><br/><i>God is beauty ! Praise him !</i></p> <p>2 None can see God above ;<br/>neighbours here we can love ;<br/>thus may we Godward move,<br/>finding him in others,<br/>sisters all, and brothers :</p> | <p>3 Jesus came, lived and died<br/>for our sake, crucified,<br/>rose again, glorified ;<br/>he was born to save us<br/>by the truth he gave us :</p> <p>4 To our Lord praise we sing —<br/>light and life, friend and king,<br/>coming down love to bring,<br/>pattern for our duty,<br/>showing God in beauty :</p> <p>Percy Dearmer (1867–1936)</p> |
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## READINGS

Luke 13:31-35; Philippians 3:17-4:1

### Luke 13:31-35.

- 31 At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."  
 32 He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.'  
 33 In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day — for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!  
 34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!  
 35 Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

### Philippians 3:17-4:1

- 17 Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.  
 18 For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the

cross of Christ.

- 19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.
- 20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,
- 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

#### Chapter 4

- 1 Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!

3<sup>RD</sup> HYMN      238 StF      Lead us, Heavenly Father, lead us.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGsvbqErM2A>

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| <p>1 Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us<br/>o'er the world's tempestuous sea ;<br/>guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,<br/>for we have no help but thee,<br/>yet possessing every blessing<br/>if our God our Father be.</p> <p>2 Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us ;<br/>all our weakness thou dost know,<br/>thou didst tread this earth before us,<br/>thou didst feel its keenest woe ;<br/>tempted, taunted, yet undaunted,<br/>through the desert thou didst go.</p> | <p>3 Spirit of our God, descending,<br/>fill our hearts with heavenly joy,<br/>love with every passion blending,<br/>pleasure that can never cloy ;<br/>thus provided, pardoned, guided,<br/>nothing can our peace destroy.</p> <p>James Edmeston (1791–1867)</p> |
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#### SERMON

#### SUCH LOVE.

**Jesus says: " ..... how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Luke 13:34b)**

**Luke 13:31-35** is interesting passage because of the insight it gives into the life of Jesus, behind the scenes. Jesus shows both courage and love.

- 1 It's curious to find some Pharisees warning Jesus against Herod. Why was this?  
Did Herod get the Pharisees to pass on a death threat?  
Were the Pharisees willing to cooperate because they hoped Jesus would move from Peraea to Judaea where they had more power?  
Does this passage suggest that not all the Pharisees were hostile to Jesus?  
Is this passage in Luke showing that there were even Pharisees who admired & respected Jesus.  
Or, are some of the Pharisees actually genuinely warning Jesus he was in danger, & even advising him to seek safety.
- 2 The Gospels give a one-sided view of the Pharisees, but the Jews knew there were good & bad Pharisees.  
Some made a display of their strict religious practices.  
But some were God-loving Pharisees who lived humbly in faith & charity.  
It's difficult to know the proportion of good to bad Pharisees.

*The Jews divided the Pharisees into 7 different classes:*

(i) ***The Shoulder Pharisees.***

*Performed their good deeds in such a manner as to be seen by all.  
It was as if they wore their good deeds on their shoulder.*

(ii) ***The Wait-a-little Pharisees.***

*They could always find an excuse for putting off a good deed until tomorrow.*

(iii) ***The Bruised or Bleeding Pharisees.***

*No Jewish Rabbi could be seen talking to any woman in the street, not even wife, mother, sister.  
Certain Pharisees took it further.  
They wouldn't even look at a woman in the street.  
They even shut their eyes to avoid seeing a woman.  
So bumped into walls & bruised themselves.  
They exhibited their bruises as special badges of extraordinary piety.  
Hence the term — *The Bruised or Bleeding Pharisees.**

(iv) ***The Pestle and Mortar or Humped-backed Pharisees.***

*They walked bent double in a false & cringing humility.*

(v) ***The Ever-reckoning Pharisees.***

*They were ever reckoning up their good deeds, & striking a balance sheet of profit & loss with God.*

(vi) ***The Timid or Fearing Pharisees.***

*They lived in fear of the wrath of God.  
They were haunted by their religion.*

(vii) ***The God-loving Pharisees.***

*They were like Abraham.  
They lived in faith & charity.*

**Today.** We still need to beware of stereotyping or showing prejudice against certain people or people in certain professions. I'm ashamed to say that, in the past, lists were even published of the most distrusted people related to their particular job!

- 3 This passage shows us Jesus talking to a king, or, more accurately, sending someone else with the message.

*He (Jesus) replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.'  
In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day — for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!"*

Herod Antipas was king of Galilee and was determined to stop Jesus.  
Jesus referred to him as that fox.

To the Jew the fox was a symbol of 3 things:

- (i) The sliest of animals.
- (ii) The most destructive of animals.
- (iii) The symbol of a worthless and insignificant man.

It takes a brave man to call the reigning king a fox.  
However, Jesus took his orders from God, the King of kings.  
It would be good for us to remember that fact when we are afraid of what someone else might say or think of us.

Jesus says what he must do, today, tomorrow & the third day.

He says on the third day he will reach his goal.

The third day meant: in a short time; or  
at the end of a definite time; or  
when he has completed his work.

For us the third day has the significance of being when Jesus rose from the dead.

#### 4 This passage tells us of Jesus' lament over Jerusalem.

If we think about the context, it shows how little we really know of Jesus' life.

Luke probably records Jesus' lament over Jerusalem here because it is related to the event he's writing about. However, it probably occurred as Jesus approached Jerusalem, as Matthew said in his account.

Surely Jesus couldn't have spoken in this way unless, prior to this, he had more than once gone with his offer of love to Jerusalem. Jesus must have had more contacts with Jerusalem than Matthew, Mark & Luke record. Therefore, this emphasises that in the Gospels we have only a small part of the events of Jesus' life.

It shows Jesus was deeply concerned about the final fate of Jerusalem.

Jesus describes Jerusalem as habitually rejecting & even killing God's messengers.

But God didn't reject Jerusalem out of hand.

Jesus would often have been willing to gather her children together, but they wouldn't come.

The responsibility of the Jews for their fate is brought home with the words, "but you were not willing!"

When a nation or individual persists in rejecting God, the end is inevitable.

Jerusalem is forsaken — God no longer lives there. Jesus' return at the Second Coming will bring recognition of his Messiahship.

There's a tenderness in the imagery of a hen & her chicks that we thought about earlier in the service. This is what Jesus did for us. Being loved this much should make a difference in your life and my life. Remember the One who loves you, and then be different because of it.

One of the most hurtful things in life is to go to someone and offer true love and have it rejected or thrown back in our face. That's what happened to Jesus in Jerusalem. Jesus continues to come to people, but people continue to reject Jesus. To reject the love of God is to be in peril of the wrath of God.

Remember that in all our circumstances, Jesus comes to you and me. I pray that we may always accept his comfort and love. And then, in the name of Jesus show care and love to others.

INTERCESSIONS Prayer for peace in Ukraine. (25 February 2022 — [Methodist.org.uk](http://Methodist.org.uk))

Holy and Gracious God,

We pray for the people of Ukraine and the people of Russia; for their countries and their leaders.

We pray for all those who are afraid; that your everlasting arms hold them in this time of great fear.

We pray for all those who have the power over life and death; that they will choose for all people life, and life in all its fullness.

We pray for those who choose war; that they will remember that you direct your people to turn our swords into ploughshares and seek for peace.

We pray for leaders on the world stage; that they are inspired by the wisdom and courage of Christ.

Above all, Lord, today we pray for peace for Ukraine.

And we ask this in the name of your blessed Son.

Lord have mercy. Amen

4<sup>TH</sup> HYMN      696 StF      For the healing of the nations.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXtfIE6jSYQ>

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| <p>1 For the healing of the nations,<br/>Lord, we pray with one accord ;<br/>for a just and equal sharing<br/>of the things that earth affords.<br/>To a life of love in action<br/>help us rise and pledge our word.</p> <p>2 Lead us forward into freedom ;<br/>from despair your world release,<br/>that, redeemed from war and hatred,<br/>all may come and go in peace.<br/>Show us how through care and goodness<br/>fear will die and hope increase.</p> | <p>3 All that kills abundant living,<br/>let it from the earth be banned ;<br/>pride of status, race, or schooling,<br/>dogmas that obscure your plan.<br/>In our common quest for justice<br/>may we hallow life's brief span.</p> <p>4 You, Creator-God, have written<br/>your great name on humankind ;<br/>for our growing in your likeness<br/>bring the life of Christ to mind ;<br/>that by our response and service<br/>earth its destiny may find.</p> <p>Fred Kaan (1929–2009)</p> |
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BLESSING      May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.