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Local Preachers Readers' Service

Christian Sharing by Mike Poole.

CHRISTIAN SHARING — Theme

ORDER OF SERVICE

Notices.....

CALL TO WORSHIP

*How wonderful it is, how pleasant
for God's people to live together in harmony. (Psalm 133.1)*

HYMN HP 484 / StF 39 Angel voices ever singing

PRAYER

Let us pray:

Dear loving, heavenly Father,
we come before you today thinking of the importance of sharing.

We remember what you freely and unconditionally give to us,
and what we can give to you in return.

We know that you give us so many gifts day by day.

We are reminded of the wonders of nature,
of family and friends.

We bring to you our thanks for all that you give to us.

We know that you are the God of all,
Creator, Healer, Counsellor and our Father.
We worship you and offer you our praise.

We know that you are a compassionate God,
that you freely and constantly forgive us,
even though we seek that compassion time and time again.

We bring to you our promise,
that we will seek to serve you,
at every opportunity.

As we accept your gifts to us,
we ask you to accept all we bring to you.
Bless this time of worship,
and may it be to your glory.
In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

We join together in saying 'The Lord's Prayer'.

Lynda

HYMN HP 489 / StF 75 From all that dwell below the skies

JeF **First LESSON**

Deuteronomy 30: 1-5

HYMN HP 758 / StF 685 In Christ there is no east or west

Second LESSON

[Introduction - On the day of Pentecost, following the coming of the Holy Spirit on the believers, the people in Jerusalem had been listening to Peter's great address. This is their response.]

Acts 2.37-47 - Life among the believers

OFFERTORY

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray:

*Lord of all good, our gifts we bring to thee:
Use them thy holy purpose to fulfil;
Tokens of love and pledges they shall be,
That our whole life is offered to thy will. (HP 797 verse 1)*

HYMN HP 753 / StF 608 All praise to our redeeming Lord

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Jeau We are going to use 790 in Hymns & Psalms for our prayers. We will read this hymn together, pausing between each verse to give us the opportunity and time for reflection.

Use 519 in Singing the Faith – 'Father I place into your hands' in a similar way.

Let us pray.

HYMN HP 770 Go forth and tell!

465

Lynda

OR

StF 410 Lord, your church on earth is seeking ...

THE BLESSING

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
rest and remain with us,
this day and for evermore. Amen.*

One of the most important facets of being a Christian is the value placed on sharing with other believers, and supporting each other. This has always been so.

With this in mind we find our text in Acts 2.44. 'All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another.' Keeping in mind the importance of mutual support, let us look a little deeper at our inherent need to share and the value it can have.

We were reminded in our reading from Deuteronomy of God's willingness to bring his scattered people back together, subject to certain conditions. 'Even if you are scattered to the furthest corners of the earth, the Lord your God will gather you together and bring you back.' But we read later in the same passage that in order to receive God's protection, his children would 'have to obey him and keep all his laws that are written in the book of his teachings.' They would have to turn to him with all their hearts. 'For such obedience, God would bring his scattered people together.' Even so long ago, there was this need to be together.

In the passage from Acts, the same need to be together and support each other is evident with the followers of Jesus after they received the gift of God's Holy Spirit.

We can all no doubt recall situations in which we have either been involved or know about, where sharing has been an integral factor. It is a well-known fact that any group of people with a common cause are able to identify with each other and offer mutual support. This could be a support group for those with a common illness or condition e.g. The Stroke Association, an addiction or an illness such as Dementia or any group that shares a concern of work or interest.

In accepting the importance of sharing within the Christian faith, we can perhaps best look at its value and strength in relation to our own faith and life today.

S HARING CAN BRING FELLOWSHIP.

There is a well known saying, 'A problem shared is a problem halved.' Feelings of isolation and vulnerability can often feel less threatening if one can find someone to share the problem with. It is a known fact that if you are facing some big ordeal, such as major surgery or a life changing situation, and you are able to talk to someone who has already gone through it, you can find an understanding and support which can be quite uplifting. We have already mentioned support groups.

Any group with a common cause gives this feeling of bonding and fellowship. Fellowship comes from sharing between those in similar positions or making similar stances, and offers mutual support.

Although support from inside the group can bring strength, it must not be allowed to isolate the group from the wider community in which it finds itself. In a way, it is like developing a fellowship within a fellowship. We can draw a parallel to our own Methodist system of having church fellowships within circuits which are themselves within districts. Hopefully, there is a sharing throughout which brings about fellowship between all levels. Thus, no-one should have to feel isolated and unsupported, regardless of size or location.

SHARING CAN BRING STRENGTH.

Sometimes a desired result can be achieved by the pooling of people's resources, knowledge and skills. A few years ago, there was a programme on television about four men who helped each other build their new homes. The men all had specific skills related to building. One was a bricklayer, another an electrician, the third a plumber and the other a carpenter. By pooling their skills together, they could satisfactorily tackle most of the work that was needed.

There is a strength that comes from belonging. Looking again at our Methodist structures we can give thanks for the strength that is hopefully generated by being part of such a system, whereby the strength and gifts of some can compensate for and help the weakness of others.

SHARING CAN BRING GREATER KNOWLEDGE.

One of the greatest benefits to be gained from attending training courses or conferences is the sharing of ideas and experiences with others attending it. One can learn as much from the knowledge brought by others as from the person actually leading the course

Life is a learning experience whereby one is constantly accumulating knowledge and developing one's personality. The same can be said about our own Christian experience. It is a process of developing and growing, of constantly learning more and more about God. There is never a time when our thirst for knowledge should be satisfied. And we can learn from one another. We benefit from the process of sharing together and helping each other develop.

SHARING IS A REFLECTION OF GOD'S DESIRE.

We are reminded of this by the words that 'one's light should not be hidden under a bushel.' One of the great commandments handed down for us to follow is 'to love our neighbour as ourselves.' Implicit in this is a desire for us to share with each other. If we consider the sign of welcome that is given to new members in the Methodist Church, we see again the concept of sharing with one another, shown in the handshake of welcome. Sharing comes to the forefront again in the communion service, not only in the implication of sharing together the body and blood of Christ, but also in the sharing of the peace with each other, which precedes it ...

If we return to the words of 'not hiding one's light under a bushel', we know that as Christians, it befits us to share our faith and our love of God. We must not hide it away.

But each one of us through our everyday lives need to seek every opportunity to share God's message with those whom we come into contact with. Our Christian faith is not an isolated faith. It is one to join people together in love and fellowship. It is one made to share.

Amen.