



The Central Norfolk Methodist Circuit

Sunday 21st June 2026

Theme "Sanctuary Sunday"

Prepared by Revd Derek Grimshaw



Opening words:

The Spirit of God is here, all around us.

Today, as we worship, help us to open our hearts and minds, to receive your Spirit in our lives, O God.

Hymn 50 Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dF5adgiO0pM>

Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise,
the city of our God, the holy place,
the joy of the whole Earth.

Great is the Lord in whom we have the victory,
he aids us against the enemy,
we bow down on our knees.

*And Lord, we want to lift your name on high,
and Lord, we want to thank you,
for the works you've done in our lives;
and Lord, we trust in your unfailing love,
for you alone are God eternal,
throughout Earth and Heaven above.*

Prayers:

Leader: God of the heavens and the earth, we arrive here today resting in the knowledge that you are far bigger than anything we can comprehend, yet you know the names of even the smallest creatures on this planet.

All: Thank you, God, for all that you are and all that you have provided.

Leader: We arrive here with you today in awe of your expansive being- both rushing waterfall and still, calming waters, we meet you where we are.

All: Thank you God for all that you are and all that you have provided.

We arrive here together today, letting go of what has been and picking up the mantle of what is to come.

All: Thank you God for all that we are and all the ways you help us along the way. Amen.

Reading: Genesis 21: 8-21 Romans 6: 1-11 Matthew 10: 24-39

Reflection:

I was at a meeting yesterday and met colleagues who I haven't seen for some time, it amused me because one by one we greeted each other and asked the question "how are you?" to which the reply came "fine, and you?" and with the nod they replied likewise. I thought about this later in the day, to be truthful, I wasn't fine, I'm tired, stressed, challenged by some aspects of modern living, overwhelmed by all the jobs I need to do and struggle with some health issues, but they don't want to hear all of that and I guess that in truth they might be carrying heavier loads than I am, so with our polite exchange we can move on. We appear to like things to be upbeat and positive and are frequently less than truthful about all that is going on in our lives.

Our bible reading today are quite difficult to deal with because they are about pain and suffering. In our Old Testament lesson, we hear the harrowing story of Hagar and Ishmael, about a woman cast out and left to fend for herself, I feel for her when she reaches the point where she loses all hope and leaves her precious child under a bush to die. As a parent and a grandparent, the thought of being in such a position breaks my heart and on this Sunday that is titled "Sanctuary Sunday" I find myself thinking of people around the world and even in our own country who are at their wits end and don't know where to turn. I can imagine meeting up and saying, "how are you?" and response might be "O, I'm fine, thanks for asking" are they, really?

During my work of ministry, I have sat with good Christian folk as they have come towards the end of their lives, and they have been burdened by something that happened in their earlier years. As their life comes towards its close they are tormented by something, and I never ask for the details, I simply pray with them that as they make what could potentially be their final confession that God will forgive them and in some way I hope that they go on their final journey read to look into the eyes of God. Paul put this exquisitely in his letter to the Romans, we in our sinfulness died on the cross with Christ and rose victorious with him. I believe that if we confess our sins to God, he

will forgive us, we might still need to face the consequences of our actions if there is a case to be heard, but in the eyes of God we are forgiven for once and for all.

One of the big issues for me when I candidated for the ministry over twenty years ago was the cost. I faced the academic challenges, I had just a fist full of GCE's and CSE's to my name, and now the Methodist Church expected me to study for a degree, something I had never done before. There was the economical challenges, I was about to leave a well-paid job, to live on a stipend. There family challenges, Karen had her own business, which would close, we had two teenage daughters who were still in education, and we were about to leave our wider family behind. Jesus reminds his disciples that there is a cost to discipleship, this is not a quick fix for an easy, happy life.

On this Sanctuary Sunday we do well to remember that we all carry our loads, some greater than others.

Hagar finds sanctuary in the word of God, when all feels to be lost, God lifts her up.

Paul reminds us that when we are lost in sin, God raises us to new life.

Jesus reminds his disciples that "Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it" on this Sanctuary Sunday we find hope for the future in our relationship with the living God

Hymn 248: I Heard the voice of Jesus say

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

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto Me and rest;
Lay down, O weary one, lay down
your head upon my breast."

I came to Jesus as I was,
weary, worn, and sad;
I found in Him a resting place,
and He has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Behold I freely give
The living water; thirsty one,
stoop down and drink, and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank
of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
and now I live in Him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"I am this dark world's Light;"
Look unto Me, your morn shall rise,
and all your day be bright."
I looked to Jesus, and I found
in Him my star, my sun;
and in that Light of life I'll walk
till traveling days are done.

Intercessions

God of the wilderness, you hear the cry that others try not to hear, and you do not forget those pushed to the edges.

We pray for all who are cast out or left behind – for refugees and displaced people, for families in temporary housing, for children caught in conflict, for mothers, fathers and carers trying to keep children safe with too little support, and for all who live with fear about what tomorrow will bring.

May they find safety, dignity, and companions on the road.

God who hears, **listen in mercy.**

We pray for places where fear turns into exclusion, where scarcity is manipulated, and where people in power build security for some by denying it to others. Disrupt cruelty, expose injustice, and turn hearts towards compassion and courage.

God who hears, **listen in mercy.**

We pray for all who feel worn down, unseen, or close to despair – for those who are grieving, anxious, exhausted, unwell, and for those who cannot yet see where the well of water is. Meet them with tenderness and raise up people who will bring practical hope.

God who hears, **listen in mercy.**

We pray for your Church. Where we have been comfortable with exclusion, forgive us. Where we have failed to hear the cry of the vulnerable, change us. Teach us to be a people who make room, share bread, carry water, and stand alongside those the world pushes aside.

God who hears, **listen in mercy.**

We bring before you those known to us who are walking through wilderness now...

Silence

God of life, when fear is loud and the future feels fragile, keep us close to Christ, that we may live with courage, mercy, and hope. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

Hymn 489: All I once held dear

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Merf00qcQik>

All I once held dear built my life upon
All this world reveres, and wars to own
All I once thought gain I have counted loss
Spent and worthless now, compared to this

Now my heart's desire is to know you more
To be found in you, and known as yours
To possess by faith what I could not earn
All surpassing gift of righteousness

*Knowing you, Jesus knowing you
There is no greater thing
You're my all you're the best
You're my joy, my righteousness
And I love you ,lord*

Oh to know the power of your risen life
And to know you in your suffering
To become like you in your death my Lord
So with You to live
And never die

Blessing

Living, loving God, let me, let each of us, live the gospel truth of resurrection and new life this day, this week, and on into the weeks ahead.

As we rise from this place, bless our living and our loving, In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.