

Christ Church New Southgate & Friern Barnet

30 April 2023

Come, let's raise our voices in worship,
knowing that God hears and knows us.
Come, let's listen and hear Jesus' voice
though our wrestling with Scripture
and in our worship today.

Loving Lord, there are many sounds around
us, lots of voices making lots of noise.
Help us to hear your voice:
of encouragement, of challenge,
of peace and comfort and joy,
as you speak into our hearts today.
Amen.

Song - Hear the call of the Kingdom

Prayer – As we stand in church today God
we ask for your presence to move
powerfully this morning. We need it badly.
We are a broken people. We need to be
made new. Speak your truth to us through
your Word. Remind us of your love for us
through Jesus. Shape our hearts, so we love
you more and love our neighbours more.
We know that you are living, and active. You
have the power to change anything. we want
to give every praise to you Lord,

Song - Every Praise

A prayer of confession
Lord, we know what we want, and we want
it now.
We will follow any new fad to get it; or any
stranger.
Forgive us, Jesus, and bring us back
to where we know and are truly known.

Lord, we know where we want to go.
And sometimes, we don't mind treading on
a few toes to get there, even trying to get
ahead of our leader.

Forgive us, Jesus, and bring us back
to where we know and are truly known.

We think we know who we are,
but only you, Lord, truly know us.
Forgive us, Jesus, and bring us back
to where we know and are truly known.

Lord, sometimes we are content with a
lesser form of life than the one you desire
for us. We don't always try to get to know
other people before we let them influence
us.

Forgive us, Jesus, and bring us back
to where we know and are truly known.
Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

Thank you, O God, that in you we have the
safety and security of your abundant
forgiveness. As hug from a friend can hold
us tight, surrounding us with warmth and
well-being, so does your forgiveness wrap us
in security and new hope.
Praise be to God.
Amen.

QUIZ

Song - Be Bold Be strong.

Reading Ephesians 2: 1-10
From Death to Life

In the past you were spiritually dead because
of your disobedience and sins. At that time
you followed the world's evil way; you
obeyed the ruler of the spiritual powers in
space, the spirit who now controls the
people who disobey God. Actually all of us
were like them and lived according to our
natural desires, doing whatever suited the
wishes of our own bodies and minds. In our

natural condition we, like everyone else, were destined to suffer God's anger. But God's mercy is so abundant, and his love for us is so great, that while we were spiritually dead in our disobedience he brought us to life with Christ. It is by God's grace that you have been saved. In our union with Christ Jesus he raised us up with him to rule with him in the heavenly world. He did this to demonstrate for all time to come the extraordinary greatness of his grace in the love he showed us in Christ Jesus. For it is by God's grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God's gift, so that no one can boast about it. God has made us what we are, and in our union with Christ Jesus he has created us for a life of good deeds, which he has already prepared for us to do.

Song - Jesus Be the Centre.

What Would Jesus Do?

I have been led, by the Spirit, to think a lot about this phrase. A couple of weeks ago I was looking for a book to read on my Kindle that was nonfiction – I have a collection of Christian books, and I scrolled to the bottom and saw this and opened it – In his steps – I couldn't see the subtitle, but there it was - What Would Jesus Do by Charles M Sheldon.

The back cover says: "Sometimes the answer to one question changes everything. When Rev. Henry Maxwell asked the members of his small church to pledge not to do anything, whether significant or mundane, without first asking themselves the question "What would Jesus do?" he had no idea what the next year would bring. Neither did those who agreed to this seemingly easy task. One by one, their lives would change. But what they never anticipated was how their entire town would be affected."

It is set in the 1890's with the First Church having mainly wealthy and influential members of the community, who become intertwined with those in the community who are poor and live in squalor.

I started reading – and found it difficult to put down. It follows the story of four prominent members of the First Church, an affluent church. They promise to take every decision for a year based on What Jesus would do. We see a newspaper editor, decide not to run stories that were expected, and losing membership, a woman with the start of a singing career (unusual in the 1890's) not take a commercial contract, and instead use her gift for the church and more than that in a different area – called the Rectangle in the book, where a missional church has been set up in a tent in the poorest area of the city. It inspires a university lecturer to come out of his gilded towers and use his intellect in politics where he might be able to make real changes – mostly to the licencing of the 'saloons' or pubs that had a real hold on the poorest and unemployed men in the community. And it inspires the minister to do more than he ever thought his church would be able to do. The word spreads amongst other churches and eventually leads to the minister resigning from his comfortable life to live and work with and among the poorest in the city.

You can buy this book on kindle for less than a pound. and for a couple of pounds second hand from online bookshops, it is a good read and does make you think... What Would Jesus Do?

The concept was first suggested by John Wesley – phrased differently - of Christian Perfection, when in a moment you are motivated completely by love of God and Neighbour, without ulterior or hidden motives. The outward action but by the effect of Grace.

The actual phrase was first written by Charles Spurgeon in 1891 in a sermon entitled 'The Agreement of Salvation by Grace with Walking in Good Works' which is a bit of a mouthful and refers to Ephesian 2 verses 9 and 10, although I would include V8 for context

"8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. 10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." (New Living Translation)

– you can find the whole sermon online and it is well worth reading, He was comparing good works with the Grace of God

He said – 'Where there are no good works, there is no indwelling of the Spirit of God. The faith which does not produce good works is not saving faith: it is not the faith of God's elect: it is not faith at all in the Scriptural sense.'

'If salvation had been by works, our Lord could not have said to the thief, dying at his side, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." That man could do no works. His hands and feet were fastened to the cross, and he was in the agonies of death. No, it must be of grace, all-conquering grace; and the modus operandi must be by faith, or else for dying men the gospel is a mockery.'

'It is a good thing to put up in your house the question, "What would Jesus do?" It answers nine out of ten of the difficulties of moral casuistry. When you do not know what to do, and the law does not seem very explicit upon it, put it so—"What would Jesus do?" Here, then, stands the case: by your creation in Christ you come to exhibit faith in him, love to him, and imitation of

him; and all these are the means by which good works are produced in you. You are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

What Would Jesus Do?

The phrase came back into popularity 100 years later in the 1990's with bracelets and keyrings, with WWJD, spawning a whole load of acronyms such as FROG – fully rely on God, PUSH – Pray until something happens, but although it is a worthing thing to become popular, it wasn't a real agent for change – just a marketing exercise.

But what do we think of these things today? Would you do as Jesus did? Would you – Could you make every decision in your life asking yourself If Jesus was here, now, what would He do? If you are a teacher – what would teacher Jesus do? If you are a plumber – what would plumber Jesus do? If an accountant – what would accountant Jesus do, If you are retired – what would retired Jesus do?

Asking the question WWJD is the easy part. Answering the question is another matter. To be honest, it doesn't really matter how we answer the question. Once we do, we will be confronted with a task we can't perform. For example, your child is seriously ill, and doctors are concerned she might not survive. What would Jesus do in that case? We know what Jesus would do in that situation because we know about the little girl he took by the hand and raised her from her deathbed (Matthew 9:18-26).

If people are lined up waiting for food because of pandemic-induced lost jobs, what would Jesus do? Once again, we know what he would do. We saw it once (or twice in Matthew's Gospel). He multiplied food and fed everyone.

I'm confident Jesus didn't heal every sick child, and he didn't end famines and feed

every hungry person. What did he do then? I don't know. We're never told that he walked away from sick and hungry people.

You and I can't raise dead people or multiply food. What do we do? We don't have the authority to forgive a person's sins, reveal their internal struggles, expose a hateful heart. These are the things Jesus did, and we can't do any of it.

We do try to make WWJD helpful. We're confident Jesus would feed the hungry, so we volunteer to help feed people a Christmas meal. We're pretty sure he would care for the sick, so we load our prayer lists with sick people. We know he would care for the homeless, so we work at the homeless shelter once a week. He would care for the poor, so we drop a few pounds in the hat of the man begging at the street corner.

Honestly, I don't think Jesus would do any of those things. I can't see him ladling gravy on the turkey at a Christmas meal, keeping a prayer list for the sick, putting in a few hours a week at the homeless shelter, or handing a beggar a few pounds.

Asking the question, "What would Jesus do?" does not provide any helpful information. It's time to rethink. A better approach is to stop trying to do what we think Jesus might do and start being Jesus. Let me try to explain...

Jesus didn't come to show us how to live. He came to live in us. We are his presence in today's world. Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

When I'm in the room, Jesus is in the room. Don't misunderstand; I'm not saying that Jesus and I are identical. What I am saying is

that Jesus is living in me. Consequently, I don't need to ask what Jesus would do. I just need to be Jesus. If I can approach life like this, suddenly I know what Jesus would do; it's the same thing I do.

Jesus "in me" means I love others and relate to others as one who loves them. Jesus doesn't toss a few coins to a beggar. I know that because that's not how any person treats someone they love. Jesus talks to people, gets to know them, spends time with them, opens up to them. I know that because I know how we treat those we love. Jesus doesn't keep a prayer list because when someone came to him with a need, he went with them to see what they could do (see Mark 5 and Jairus' daughter). I know that because that's how we treat people we love.

When Jesus did something, it seems everyone involved was uncomfortable. When learning that his friend Lazarus was nearing death, Jesus stalled for several days. When the adulterous woman was slammed down in front of him, he talked about sinners throwing stones at others, and everyone walked away stunned. When the crippled man was lowered through the ceiling, Jesus forgave the man's sin. When Peter swung his sword to defend Jesus against the Roman soldier, Jesus healed the wounded man's ear.

People were excited when Jesus came to town, but after he spoke and touched people, it seems many were left scratching their heads because they were caught off guard. It seems he challenged every norm, both religious and secular. He continually gave people more than they sought and asked them to give more than they could afford.

Next time you ask the question, "What would Jesus do?" if your answer doesn't

make you uncomfortable, then you probably have the wrong answer.

Yet we pride ourselves on doing the things that allow us to remain in our comfort. For example, if we're walking down the street and approached by a beggar, someone telling us they're hungry and haven't eaten in a while, our first reaction might be to say something like, "I'm sorry, I don't have any money on me," as we keep moving. We can always feel good by assuming they're lazy and won't work.

Then we stop and think, what would Jesus do? So, we stop and pull out a £5 note or if we want to give more than money, take them to the nearest cafe and buy them a meal.

But think with me for a minute. If Jesus had your resources in that situation, what would he do? Would he give £5 or buy a meal for the hungry man? What if he lived in a house with a kitchen filled with food? What if he had thousands of dollars in the bank? What would he do? If he did something that made everyone uncomfortable, what would that be? What if you decided to be Jesus in that moment?

Certainly, I'm not going to pretend to know what you should do or even to presume to know what Jesus would do, but what are some things that would make us uncomfortable? Perhaps we could take the hungry man to the nearest supermarket and load him up with a week's worth of groceries.

The one thing I know for sure is that Jesus always did the most loving thing. That's what I mean when I say we need to be Jesus. Being Jesus means we love people. Don't get sidetracked by trying to love everyone; love those in your world. You can't love every person you see, but you can love more people than you are now.

Doing nice things is easy; loving people is hard. Doing kind acts brings joy; loving people can be dangerous. It ultimately cost Jesus his life.

It would take real commitment, and actual suffering to do what Jesus did. When tempted, he refused, he got angry with injustice, he wept when he was sad, he associated with prostitutes and tax collectors – the despised of the world. He made disciples, and taught in temples, he fed people, he had compassion, and he took time away from his duties to pray. He loved us, all of us young and old, rich or poor, homed or homeless, sick or healthy, citizen or refugee, close to God or far away.

Could we love like Jesus loved? If we could be even 10% more loving, more compassionate – how could that change the world? Could you make others uncomfortable by loving those that are unloved and uncared for. Could we seek Gods Kingdom here on Earth, What Would Jesus Do?

Prayers of intercession

Dear Lord, help us to listen to the voice of Jesus:
and follow where he leads.

Dear Lord, as we come together now to pray for the needs of the world, help us to focus on who you are. Help us to choose you to be our great influencer. Help us not to listen to the voices in the world that would turn us away from you but instead to focus on your words and your ways. We pause for a moment to confess, in the silence, times when other voices have had priority over yours this week.... Help us to learn from these experiences so that, when we face the same situations again, we will know how to focus on your guidance and leading instead of going our own way. We also think now about times this week when we had the courage to follow your

lead. Help us to grow in our faith so that it becomes easier and easier to go your way and not ours....

Dear Lord, help us to listen to the voice of Jesus:
and follow where he leads.

Heavenly Father, we rejoice that this week will bring the coronation of King Charles III. We pray for him as he prepares for this moment. Fill him with your wisdom that he may reign righteously and with integrity. Help him to listen only to you as his guide and influencer so that he will lead our nation with wisdom. Give the king courage and an awareness of your presence as he comes to this auspicious moment. We pray for the ceremony in Westminster Abbey that it might be another opportunity for the world to see who you are through the words, readings, hymns and prayers. We ask for safety during the ceremony and the celebrations around the country. We ask that your blessing will rest on all who are participating in any way. And we remember with joy the service and dedication of Queen Elizabeth II, who followed you all her life.

Dear Lord, help us to listen to the voice of Jesus:
and follow where he leads.

We pray for our world, where so many leaders and rulers do not follow your way, Lord Jesus. We ask that you would show yourself clearly to all those in power so that they choose to follow. We lift particular places of conflict and pain to you this week: Sudan, Ukraine, Yemen, and other places of conflict no longer in the news. Lord, raise up people of courage and peacemakers in these lands whose influence will lead to a cessation of violence and, instead, your reign of peace.

Dear Lord, help us to listen to the voice of Jesus:
and follow where he leads.

We pray for our own government, asking that its ministers will be people of integrity and compassion. We pray for those who are decision-makers, that they will be given (and listen to) wisdom. We continue to pray for settlements that are suitable for our public workers in order that they are able end to the strikes and unsettling situations. We pray for all those who just cannot make ends meet anymore and are in despair. We continue to pray for our foodbanks and other support agencies. Help us as individuals, and as a church community, to seek your wisdom on what more we might be able to do to help others in our local communities.

Dear Lord, help us to listen to the voice of Jesus:
and follow where he leads.

Dear Lord, we pray for those who are in particular need of your comfort and sustaining love right now. We pray for those who are ill, in mourning, in sadness or in confusion. We lift up to you those who are anxious or depressed, asking you to give them a revelation of your joy. Bring peace to those in distress. We name in the silence those we know who need your love, Give us the wisdom to know how to be a help, a comfort and support....

Dear Lord, help us to listen to the voice of Jesus:
and follow where he leads.

Dear Lord, as we enter a new month that seems full of bank holidays and opportunities for recreation, we ask that we will find time to rest and enjoy all that the springtime has to offer: warmer days, spring flowers, time with family and friends. We ask you to help us know how to truly make the most of time away from work so that we can be refreshed. We pray for all those who need to work at these times, that they will have other opportunities to spend time away.

Dear Lord, help us to listen to the voice of Jesus:
and follow where he leads.

As we go into this new week, go before us,
Lord, so that we can see where you are
leading. Whether life is very normal this
week or full of surprises and unexpected
moments, help us to keep our eyes firmly
fixed on you and our ears tuned to listen to
your voice.

All these prayers we ask in the name of
Jesus,
Amen.

We will be playing a song after the service by
Stewart Townend called streets of our city, if
you are watching online, I encourage you to
look for it!

Song – We seek your kingdom

As we leave this place,
go with us and guide us through the coming
days.

Protect us from harm and help us to hear
your voice.

Create opportunities for us to share your
love with those we meet.

And let us say the Grace to each other

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all, now and for evermore.
Amen.