

## Sunday Service 27<sup>th</sup> September 2020

### Who Am I?

Charmaine Slade

#### Call to Worship

We begin with some words from Psalm 37 v 5-6.

Commit everything you do to the Lord.

Trust Him and he will help you.

He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn,

And the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun.

Amen

#### Song 1 'I am who you say I am'. Hillsong

Who am I that the highest King

Would welcome me?

I was lost but He brought me in

Oh His love for me

Oh His love for me

*Who the Son sets free*

*Oh is free indeed*

*I'm a child of God*

*Yes I am*

Free at last, He has ransomed me

His grace runs deep

While I was a slave to sin

Jesus died for me

Yes He died for me

*Who the Son sets free*

*Oh is free indeed*

*I'm a child of God*

*Yes I am*

*In my Father's house*

*There's a place for me*

*I'm a child of God*

*Yes I am*

I am chosen  
Not forsaken  
I am who You say I am

You are for me  
Not against me  
I am who You say I am

I am chosen  
Not forsaken  
I am who You say I am

You are for me  
Not against me  
I am who You say I am  
I am who You say I am

*Who the Son sets free  
Oh is free indeed  
I'm a child of God  
Yes I am*

*In my Father's house  
There's a place for me  
I'm a child of God  
Yes I am*

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## Opening prayers

Lord God, in a universe that seems so immense it is easy to feel insignificant as we stand here today. Yet we know that we are precious in your sight - unique individuals loved and blessed in so many ways. We stand in awe of the one who has created all things and dedicate this time and all our days to your service.

Let us be still for a moment as we draw near to worship God... Take just a few seconds to remind yourself why we are gathered together today... Listen, God speaks even through the background noise of the world around us...

Lord Jesus we come to you this morning not as individuals but as your whole people to worship you. Help us to be aware of each other as an unbroken circle stretching right round this church. May we in spirit, hands joined, look to you the centre of our circle and feel your love pulsing through us to reach out to our neighbours about us. Help us to worship you today not selfishly and individually, but with a deep awareness of each other. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

### Song 2 'Shine Jesus Shine'

Lord, the light of your love is shining  
In the midst of the darkness, shining  
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us  
Set us free by the truth you now bring us  
Shine on me, shine on me

*Shine, Jesus, shine! Fill this land with the Father's glory  
Blaze, Spirit, blaze! Set our hearts on fire  
Flow, river, flow! Flood the nations with grace and mercy  
Send forth your word Lord, and let there be light*

Lord, I come to your awesome presence  
From the shadows into your radiance  
By the blood I may enter your brightness  
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness  
Shine on me, shine on me

*Shine, Jesus, shine! Fill this land with the Father's glory  
Blaze, Spirit, blaze! Set our hearts on fire  
Flow, river, flow! Flood the nations with grace and mercy  
Send forth your word Lord, and let there be light*

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### Song 3 'The Father's Song by Matt Redman'

I have heard so many songs  
Listened to a thousand tongues  
But there is one  
That sounds above them all

The Fathers song  
The Fathers love  
You sung it over me and for eternity  
Its written on my heart

*Heavens perfect melody  
The Creators symphony  
You are singing over me  
The Fathers song  
Heavens perfect mystery  
The king of love has sent for me  
And now you're singing over me  
The Fathers song*

I have heard so many songs  
Listened to a thousand tongues  
But there is one  
That sounds above them all  
The Fathers song  
The Fathers love  
You sung it over me and for eternity  
Its written on my heart

*Its Heavens perfect mystery  
The king of love has sent for me  
And now you're singing over me  
The Fathers song*

The Fathers song  
The Fathers love  
You sung it over me and for eternity  
Its written on my heart  
The Fathers song  
The Fathers love  
You sung it over me and for eternity  
Its written on my heart  
Its written on my heart

## Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray to the Lord,  
who is our refuge and stronghold.  
For the health and well-being of our nation,  
that all who are fearful and anxious  
may be at peace and free from worry:

Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For the isolated and housebound,  
that we may be alert to their needs,  
and care for them in their vulnerability:

Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For our homes and families,  
our schools and young people,  
and all in any kind of need or distress:

Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For a blessing on our local community,  
that our neighbourhoods may be places of trust and friendship,  
where all are known and cared for:

Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,  
to the mercy and protection of God.  
Merciful Father, **accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.**

In a few moments of quiet, bring forward your silent prayers,  
knowing they will be heard.

In case anyone of us needs reminding of this,

here are the words of *Barbara Glasson, President of the Methodist Conference*

We are not people of fear:

we are people of courage.

We are not people who protect our own safety:

we are people who protect our neighbours' safety.

We are not people of greed:

we are people of generosity.

We are your people God,

giving and loving,

wherever we are,

whatever it costs

For as long as it takes

wherever you call us.

Amen

### Gospel reading 1 Peter 2:1-10

So abandon every form of evil, deceit, hypocrisy, feelings of jealousy and slander. In the same way that nursing infants cry for milk, you must intensely crave the pure spiritual milk of *God's Word*. For this "milk" will cause you to grow into maturity, fully nourished and strong for life – especially now that you have had a taste of the goodness of the Lord Jehovah and have experienced his kindness.

So keep coming to him who is the Living Stone – though he was rejected and discarded by men but chosen by God and is priceless in God's sight. Come and be his "living stones" who are continually being assembled into a sanctuary for God. For now you *serve* as holy priests, offering up spiritual sacrifices that he readily accepts through Jesus Christ. For it says in Scripture:

Look! I lay a cornerstone in Zion,

a chosen and priceless stone!

And whoever believes in him

will certainly not be disappointed.

As believers you know his great worth – indeed, his preciousness is *imparted* to you. But for those who do not believe:

The stone that the builders rejected and discarded

has now become the cornerstone

and

A stone that makes them stumble  
and a rock to trip over.

They keep stumbling over the message because they refuse to believe it. And this they were destined to do. But you are God's chosen treasure – priests who are kings, a spiritual "nation" set apart as God's devoted ones. He called you out of darkness to experience his marvellous light, and now he claims you as his very own. He did this so that you would broadcast his glorious wonders *throughout the world*. For at one time you were not God's people, but now you are. At one time you knew nothing of God's mercy, because you hadn't received it yet, but now you are drenched with it.

### Sermon 'Who Are You?

Have you ever wondered who you really are? What makes you the person that you are? I'm sure most of us have and it's interesting how people identify themselves. Think about it? If you are meeting someone new, how often do we describe ourselves by what we do, rather than who we are?

I'm someone's Mum, I'm an accountant, a teacher, a nurse, I'm at college or uni. I'm just at school. I'm unemployed. Just married. I'm homeless.

The list of descriptors is endless.

Let's talk about Jane, and there many are like her. Strikingly beautiful, willowy and elegant. Clearly very intelligent. Yet there is a fragility about her, something skittish and nervy. She admits to great loneliness and aches to find someone who will love her. One wonders how someone like her could be suffering with such low self-esteem. Why doesn't she have more confidence in herself?

She is hanging on to old memories of rejection that occurred in her teens. As she grew into adolescence her lips become full and before long other kids were teasing her cruelly, calling her rubber lips. She was the one left out at the youth club dances and the sense of shame never left her. Those childish taunts have continued to affect her sense of value long into adulthood.

Who remembers the ghastly experience of PE lessons at school? I certainly do and painfully so. The agony of waiting on the edge of the hockey field as the team captains choose their side. Knowing full well that no one would choose me as I couldn't run fast or hit a ball to save my life! Knowing that I would always be the last one left and put in goal. Skin all goose bumps and chapped with the icy wind, then punished by being the last girl again and again. And that's not to mention the hideous brown PE pants we were obliged to wear! To this day I've hated sport of all descriptions and I still haven't forgotten the pain of rejection repeating over and over, every week.

### You are acceptable

Many, many studies have proven that how we see ourselves, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. That how we see ourselves becomes who we are.... victims become victims. Losers can become losers. Frightened people continue to live as frightened people. If we think we aren't creative then that is how it will stay. If we think we are rubbish then we behave in the same way. Just like Jane, we unintentionally set ourselves up to fail. Our beliefs about ourselves determine our behaviour.

As in Jane's case, these beliefs we have about ourselves often originate in childhood but not always. A tormented wife or husband will soon believe their tormentor is correct.

Of course so many of these beliefs are completely false. Many people have a negative view of themselves because of erroneous information they have received from misinformed and unauthorised sources in their lives.

We need to look at ourselves from a different perspective. We need to hear from someone who is informed and an authorised source, we need to listen to someone who we can count on to be truthful. God is the absolute authority on who we are. Whatever our view on evolution and the question of science, we are God's creation. He is the one we should be listening to. He gives us the correct information. When God who is the ultimate authority tells us something, then we can count on it.

## 1 Peter 2:9-10 Contemporary English Version (CEV)

But you are God's chosen and special people. You are a group of royal priests and a holy nation. God has brought you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Now you must tell all the wonderful things that he has done. The Scriptures say, "Once you were nobody. Now you are God's people. At one time no one had pity on you. Now God has treated you with kindness. "Once you were nobody, now you are God's people" .....

Most of us spend much of our lives searching for acceptance. We search for it from our peers, our partners, our parents. We seek it from people we admire and those we envy or aspire to be like. Our desire for acceptance influences the clothes we wear, the company we keep, the career we choose and even the things we say.

Why are we all so driven to search for acceptance? Because it fulfils a basic human need! A rejected caveman wouldn't last long on his own if his tribe didn't accept him!

Acceptance stimulates our brains to produce endorphins, or happy hormones. It feels good. So the cycle repeats itself again. Man seeks acceptance, when accepted he is flooded with happy hormones, over and over again. When you feel accepted your self-esteem is raised.

When God says "You are God's chosen and special people" then we had better believe it! For it is only God who has the authority to tell us who we are. Whatever our failings and flaws God accepts us just as we are. Without any caveats, He invites us to play for his team. We don't need to be our best selves. He loves and accepts us just as we are. He accepts us even if we don't place much value on ourselves. It matters not a jot how rubbish our lives may be right now, how broken and lost, because we are adored and precious in the eyes of God.

### You are Valuable

Looking at things from a different perspective, how much do you think you are worth? Not financially of course, but self-worth. How do we determine value?

There are 2 things that determine value in life. 1) A value depends upon how much someone is willing to pay for it and 2) value depends on who has owned that item in the past. For example, a grand piano will be more valuable if it was previously owned by Elton John!

Based on these 2 criteria, how valuable are you? The scriptures says "You were bought and paid for by Christ, so you belong to Him. God exchanged His only son for you, for us, Jesus died a cruel and barbaric death to save us. God is saying, I love you this much! Jesus paid the ultimate price for each one of us. Doesn't that tell you how priceless you are? It is a difficult concept I think, trying to comprehend the immense value Jesus places on each one of us. When in society's value system we are but a dot on a graph. When to Jesus we are the most precious treasure in the world.

### You are capable

In our reading today we heard not only that we are a chosen people but indeed that we are royal priests! That's just a bit daunting when you first hear it I think! But put it this way, Peter is saying 2 things here. 1) we ordinary folk can speak directly to God just as priests do and 2) we have a responsibility to minister to the needs of other people. God is saying we are to minister or care for His people, to do His work and to tell others of the night and day difference He has made to us. We have been saved to serve others. If we are not serving, what were we saved for? Today we are talking about who we are? If you are doubting your value today, think on this. Jesus holds you in such high esteem that He is giving you His work to do.

### You are forgivable

Peter goes on to say that we are forgivable "Once you received no mercy, now you have received Gods mercy". I am saying that the three words we need to know if we are to comprehend our true value are "**You are forgiven**". Our sins are wiped out, gone forever, treated as though they never existed. As a poster outside is saying, when we come to Christ our sins are wiped out, not rubbed in.

Let me tell you about something I heard a while ago. In Great Dunmow there is a Rolls Royce car dealership. We all know that a Rolls is incredibly expensive and a huge status symbol. Those who own one expect nothing but the best. A gentleman had owned one and had had years of perfect service but one day hit a pot-hole which snapped the rear axle. The car went into repair and the owner was surprised when he received his car back the next day, without a bill. The car had been fixed for free.....so he rang of course to see what was happening and this is the reply he received. "We have no record of your car being damaged and so there is no charge." This company's commitment to excellence would not permit a flaw to be known and so they had repaired it overnight and without charge. As if nothing had ever happened.

And so it is with God's mercy. When we confess our sin, Christ forgives us in an instant and without charge, as if nothing had ever been wrong. How highly valued does that make you feel!

### Conclusion

So there we have it. The 4 pillars of self-esteem. I am acceptable. I am valuable. I am capable. I am forgivable. When we know this and when understand that the world's judgement does not matter, we know our true value. Next time you feel your sense of value dipping, remember who you are and adjust your crown, you child of God!  
Amen

### Song 4 .Hear the call of the kingdom' with Keith and Krystina Getty

Hear the call of the kingdom, lift your eyes to the King,  
Let His song rise within you as a fragrant offering,  
Of how God, rich in mercy, came in Christ to redeem  
All who trust in His unfailing grace.

Hear the call of the Kingdom to be children of light,  
With the mercy of heaven, the humility of Christ.  
Walking justly before Him, loving all that is right  
That the life of Christ may shine through Him.

*King of Heaven, we will answer the call,  
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,*

*Filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim  
Salvation in Jesus' name.*

Hear the call of the Kingdom to reach out to the lost,  
With the Father's compassion in the wonder of the cross,  
Bringing peace and forgiveness, and a hope yet to come;  
Let the nations put their trust in Him.

*King of Heaven, we will answer the call,  
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,  
Filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim  
Salvation in Jesus' name.*

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### The Offering

Heavenly Father, you have given us riches beyond measure. We can only return a fraction of what we owe you; but we ask, Lord, that you will bless our offerings and help us to use them wisely in your service and for your glory. Amen

### The Blessing

Rev 1:5b-6

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.