

## Service Transcript

6<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Service Leader: Mark Reid

Hello and welcome to our Sunday Service for 6<sup>th</sup> September. It's our last online only service at MRBC, as next week there will be a service at the church as well as on the website.

Today's service is a Communion Service and now would be a good time to pause and grab bread and wine or juice if you've not got some already.

We are here to celebrate Jesus, the one who died and who's risen and who is our great High Priest in heaven. As God's people in Christ, we are all His priests and Jesus is there as the high priest who has gone before us.

The Christian life is one of assurance, being sure of the One we have believed in and decided to follow.

### **Will you listen to His voice?**

Today, will you listen for his voice?

Do you want to hear?

How will you cope when he speaks?

Do you want to hear?

Today, if he speaks of love will you accept it?

If he speaks of truth will you believe it?

If he speaks of laying down, will you release it?

If he speaks of vision will you see it?

Are you ready now to worship, to kneel down?

Today, if you hear his voice -

Do not harden your hearts.

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We are coming to Communion: let's allow the Holy Spirit to lead us to the cross and to remember afresh what it meant for Jesus to have had His body broken and His blood shed for us.

### **Prayer**

Father, as we come around your table this morning, even though it is virtual table online, may we know the presence of Jesus as Your Spirit speaks into our lives. May we hear His voice, may we know His encouragement as we consider the cross and remember the broken body and shed blood of Jesus, and acknowledge the self-sufficiency of His shed blood.

Hallelujah! Because of His sufferings we are made free and you seek to pour out Your blessings and privilege on us. Help us to understand a little more of what it meant for Jesus to have died for us, that today we may see You more clearly, understand You more nearly and love You more dearly

We ask this in Jesus' name

Amen

The cross is immensely important. As we eat the bread and drink the wine, we remember not just everything He has done to rescue us, to bring salvation, but all that He has made us in Christ. A couple of weeks ago we reminded ourselves that in Jesus, we have become priests: that we have each been inducted into the Priesthood of all Believers because of our faith in Christ. It is part of a whole host of blessings God is going to pour out on His people which we remembered in our first song today.

So as priests we have a special access to God, but we also have responsibility to mediate for others, to worship, to draw others to God. For priesthood to work in a sinful world, where we are a sinful race, when we often live in disobedience; a holy God needs to deal with those issues if we are to function as priests, be fit for His presence and have the right and authority to represent Him to others.

For the Levitical Priesthood that involved a system of sacrifices and particularly the appointment of a high priest to make a sacrifice of atonement by shedding the blood of animals on behalf of the nation.

The principle remains the same with the priesthood of all believers. For us to be fit to enter into the presence of God, blood had to be shed for our sins. And of course, we know whose blood: Jesus. He was the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. When He died on the cross he paid the penalty for our sins. He's the High Priest that now approaches God on our behalf, because God's righteous demands have been satisfied by the shedding of His blood. Here's a few verses from Hebrews 7:

*Hebrews 7: 23 .... There were many of those other priests, because they died and could not continue their work. 24 But Jesus lives on forever, and his work as priest does not pass on to someone else. 25 And so he is able, now and always, to save those who come to God through him, because he lives forever to plead with God for them.*

Now the question Jews who read Hebrews would ask was; how could Jesus be a priest when under the covenant with Israel, priests could only be of the tribe of Levi and Jesus was of the line of King David of Judah? He was the wrong tribe by birth. The more observant will know what we discovered last time from Exodus 19, that God intended the whole of Israel to be priests. How can anyone be priests of God if they are not of the Levitical Order? Easy. There must be another order of priesthood. And there was: Here's some more of Hebrews 7

*Hebrews 7: 15 The matter becomes even plainer; a different priest has appeared, who is like Melchizedek. 16 He was made a priest, not by human rules and regulations, but through the power of a life which has no end. 17 For the scripture says, "You will be a priest forever, in the priestly order of Melchizedek." 18 The old rule, then, is set aside, because it was weak and useless. 19 For the Law of Moses could not make anything perfect. And now a better hope has been provided, through which we come near to God.*

The Jews understood that Messiah was to be a king and a priest under the order of Melchizedek. The writer to the Hebrews describes him like this: *This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, <sup>2</sup> and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, the name Melchizedek means “king of righteousness”; then also, “king of Salem” means “king of peace.” <sup>3</sup> Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.* Hebrews 7:1-3 Who on earth was this enigmatic priest-king, Melchizedek? There have been lots of theories over the years. Was Melchizedek a theophany – an appearance of God in bodily form? That’s not clear although much of his description fits. What is clear is that he did not qualify as a priest by birth. In fact, whether a theophany or not, this priest and king, Melchizedek was not a member of Abram’s line – he was effectively a Gentile!

How was he a priest? Because God gave him that priestly authority. Levitical priests got their authority because it was specified in the covenant. God has the right and authority to appoint anyone he pleases as priests according to His grace. And that’s what the Order of Melchizedek is made up of – priests whom God has decided He wants to give the privilege of communing with Him, or representing Him and serving His purposes and it’s because of His grace. But how can a holy God deal with the issue of the sin of these priests He appoints?

He dealt with the issue of sin through the shedding of Jesus’ blood, which is why Jesus is our High Priest. Let’s read on in Hebrews 7:26-28

*26 Jesus, then, is the High Priest that meets our needs. He is holy; he has no fault or sin in him; he has been set apart from sinners and raised above the heavens. 27 He is not like other high priests; he does not need to offer sacrifices every day for his own sins first and then for the sins of the people. He offered one sacrifice, once and for all, when he offered himself. 28 The Law of Moses appoints men who are imperfect to be high priests; but God's promise made with the vow, which came later than the Law, appoints the Son, who has been made perfect forever.*

Like the High priest of the Old Covenant, He has presented Himself as a sacrifice once for all to deal with our sins and our priesthood is under Him. It’s also why there are no Levitical type priests in the NT, because priests are not required to present sin offerings, and peace offerings – because of Jesus, they are gone, swept aside, as we read. As I said last time, the only sacrifice God wants of human beings who follow Him are themselves. Whatever worship comes from their lives, words or praise, comes out of that.

All we need to know God, to do His will, to perform our function as priests of the Most High God is to depend on the one who lives to intercede for us. Jesus represents us before the throne of God, we represent the Father in His name by the power of the Spirit.

Jesus is all we need to function as the people of God, His priests, and our next song reflects that:

So in Christ, we are priests of God. What difference is that going to make to my life and your life today, particularly as we share together in Communion? Let me read some verses I usually read before we come to communion as they answer that question:

*Heb 10:19-25* <sup>19</sup> Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, <sup>21</sup> and since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup> let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. <sup>23</sup> Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

There are no ceremonies necessary, no rituals to perform, but we are told in this passage what we should be like in the way we live and worship and there are four points the writer to the Hebrews gives us:

- Use your freedom, You have the right to come before God freely, whenever and whenever. God is a holy God, unreachable by most human beings, but in Christ, our priesthood means that we can approach God's throne with confidence, we may come boldly, wherever and whenever. That's fantastic, amazing! Wherever and when ever? Yes! How much do we take advantage of our right and opportunity? Not enough perhaps? That's something we can easily change! *Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings.*
- Hold on to the hope – we can trust God and His promises. Take a look back at Andrew Ollerton's excellent sermon last week. Hang on to hope. It's one of the characteristics that makes us different in the gloom and doom that we hear in the news so often. *Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.* It's our priestly duty to spread that hope.
- Be concerned for one another. What characterised the priesthood of all believers was their concern for one another. Quite the reverse, let's spur one another on to love and good deeds. It's what church is about. We are community, a family, the body of Christ. It's one of the things I think most of the fellowship missed in the last 6 months. We have had our contact limited to a little rectangle on a screen for most of the time. Let one of the lessons of lockdown be that we learn to appreciate one another as a church and *let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*
- Don't give up meeting with one another. Going on from that don't give up meeting together. Many of us have enjoyed not having to go around the church for meetings. We've also learned that church isn't the only way we can pick up teaching about our faith. But I hope we have also learned that if we want to grow as the Lord's people, if we want to become more effective in our priestly duty, then we have to grow together in Christ. There's no alternative to meeting together to worship, pray, look at God's word and I think the last 6 months has underlined that.

Yes, we have learned some new stuff. We've got some new ways to communicate the Good News. We've got stuff done. But meeting together is still important, with face to face meeting being central to a healthy church. We may want to change how we meet, but we should never *not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing*. Face to face is the best way of encouraging one another. Yes, there are a myriad of ways now of communication, but let's value in a fresh way the privilege of gathering together as we restore it over the next few weeks and months.

## CONFESSION

Let's pray:

Father, we come before you as a people to whom you've given such a massive privilege and opportunity – to approach your throne wherever we are, whenever we wish. Yet we must admit, so often we don't. Forgive us for those times we could and should have spoken to you but didn't.

Lord Jesus, thank you that you ever live to intercede for us. We have to admit that we fail and fall so much: thank you that you are there for us.

Holy Spirit, thank you that even when we can't find the words to pray, you intercede for us with sighs and groanings too deep for words.

So we take this opportunity Almighty God to come to you admitting our shortcomings, or sin, our failures, recognising that the Lord Jesus Christ, our great High Priest has gone before us with His own shed blood that covers all our sin, failures and shortcomings. Thank you Jesus for what You have done for us.

Let's take a few moments silence to bring our own personal thoughts and prayers before Him.

Silence

Let your aching heart express itself.

*Be still.*

Do not fear what may be released.

In God's presence all is made safe.

*Be still.*

Offer your heart to God —  
he will receive you and shelter you,  
until it is time for healing.

*Be still.*

Be with God.

*Be whole.*

## COMMUNION PRAYER

Loving God,  
we praise and thank you  
for your love shown to us in Jesus Christ.

We thank you for his life and ministry,  
announcing the good news of your kingdom  
and demonstrating its power  
in the lifting of the downtrodden,  
and the healing of the sick,  
and the loving of the loveless.

We thank you for his sacrificial death upon the cross  
for the redemption of the world,  
and for your raising him to life again,  
as a foretaste of the glory we shall share.

16 The Lord's Supper We give you thanks for this bread and wine,  
symbols of our world  
and signs of your transforming love.  
Send your Holy Spirit, we pray,  
that we may be renewed  
into the likeness of Jesus Christ  
and formed into his Body.  
This we pray in his name and for his sake. Amen.

#### WORDS OF INSTITUTION

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said,

*"This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."*

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying,

*"This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."*

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

#### THE BREAD AND WINE

Father, we recommit our lives, our hearts, our thoughts, our everything to You. Fill us afresh today with Your Holy Spirit. Help us to hold this fresh remembrance close to our heart. Help us to share its message faithfully as You give opportunity. May we be in our lives and our words your priests, representing You to others and with our fellow saints to bring Good News and to glorify Jesus, our great High priest  
In His Precious name,  
Amen

#### FELLOWSHIP PRAYERS

For our Fellowship Prayers today, we are not going to have a formal prayer time, but we are going to spend time bringing the needs of those nearest and dearest to us, those that need prayer and those we know of who need prayer.

Silence

Let us say this prayer – we all say the words in italics, and I say those that aren't.

*Be with me in the good times, help me in the hard times.*  
When I am feeling good and nothing seems to go wrong  
*Be with me in the good times, help me in the hard times.*  
When everything I touch works out right, and everyone likes me  
*Be with me in the good times, help me in the hard times.*  
When times are hard and I seem to make mistakes  
*Be with me in the good times, help me in the hard times.*  
When I suffer pain and hurt, and I can't see an end  
*Be with me in the good times, help me in the hard times.*  
When everything is exciting, and when everything is dull  
*Be with me in the good times, help me in the hard times.*  
When I love you with all my heart, and when I forget all about you  
*Be with me in the good times, help me in the hard times.*  
*Amen*

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Next week, we have the opportunity of meeting together again in our own building. But we've got to be honest, it's going to be a bit different because the regulations and guidelines that the Government have placed on us. So how is it going to be different? Here's a little video for you – *video text follows*.

It's going to be nice isn't it – to see people we've not seen face to face, or maybe not at all for 6 months. On the other hand we are coming back to things being rather different because of measures we have to take because of the Coronavirus. So what are we going to encounter as we come back to our first Sunday Service at church and how can we prepare?

First of all, the only way in will now be through the back door, and for Sunday Services, the main exit will be through what is usually our main entrance. There will be a one-way system marked clearly on the floor.

So let's look at the process of coming into the church building. As we enter the building, you will need to put your mask on, unless you have a medical reason not to wear one (we have some if you forget). We will need to keep our masks on throughout the service until we leave the building.

As we come through the door, there will be some important notices about not coming if we have any Covid-19 symptoms and other arrangements. On the left as we come through the door we will be greeted, reminded about the importance of not being at church if we have Covid symptoms and our names taken for the register as well as our phone number if we don't have details (we keep these for 3 weeks as per Test and Trace requirements). We then pick up our Weekly Sheet and use the sanitiser before going to sit down. Please try to avoid touching surfaces whilst in the building as this reduces transmission of Covid.

Because we have to seat people to ensure social distancing, we shall be showing everybody to their seats, filling up downstairs from the back first. We have 20 seats available downstairs and when these are full, we will be asking people to go upstairs where there are seats for 20 more. You can only sit next to someone if you are in the same household or are in a family bubble.

Because we have to get people logged in and then shown to their seats, it means that people will need to wait to be seated, and there are queue markings on the floor at 2m intervals. Because of the need to queue, we would recommend that you get to church early to avoid a people jam, and particularly if you like a seat near the back. You will not get a choice of where you sit, as seats have to be filled in order, to comply with social distancing.

Once we are seated, we would ask you to remain in your seat until it's time to leave. On a practical note, we would ask you to not use the toilets unless you really have to. Please attend to your toilet requirements before you leave home. Our toilets will be available if you do need to use them and there will be cleaning materials for you to wipe surfaces down before and after. If you are caught short during the service, please leave the church building through the one way system and come back into the church through the other door.

So you get to your seat. You'll find we'll put a copy of the Weekly Sheet out for you. Please take it away with you. There are no Bibles in the seat pockets – please bring your own, although we will display words on the screen. The services will be much the same as usual – or at least like our online service – you will get an identical service to the one on the website. Unfortunately there will be no congregational singing or live instruments – we will be having video songs you can hum or clap to, or just meditate on the words – just not sing to. However we will be allowing responsive prayers, as we can use our normal speaking voices, and it will be an opportunity for us to stand during the service. Some of each service will be led by video.

We will be taking an offering as usual at the service, but we won't be passing bags around. There will be baskets you will be able to put your offering in before or after the service.

Once the service is over (about an hour), we will all need to leave the building promptly. If you would like to hang around talking, that I'm afraid will need to be outside the front of the building or in the car park. We are not able to serve refreshments. If you need water or a soft drink during the service, you will need to bring your own.

So that's the new normal. I know it doesn't seem as relaxed and welcoming as we are normally used to but we ask for your help and understanding in making this work – in other churches I'm told that most people get used to it after a couple of weeks. Of course, we will change and adapt as the rules hopefully relax.



You may ask yourself the question: is it safe to come to church? We can't make any absolute guarantees - no-one can - but we have followed the Government guidelines, so if you have been using shops and restaurants, you will be as safe in church as in these places. If you are in a vulnerable or at risk group, the Government's advice is that you weigh up the potential risks before coming.

If you're not ready to come back yet, then our online services will continue as usual each week from 10-30am – and will be the same as at church. One way or another, see you Sunday!

Closing words

### **For Reflection & Discussion**

Read Genesis 14:17-22

1. In this passage, in what ways did Abram honour God after his victory over the kings? What can we learn from it in terms of our relationship to God and others?

Read Hebrews 7

2. In what ways was, and is Jesus a priest to us? From where does He get His authority? (You may want to look back through the sermon).
3. As priests, how are we like Jesus, and how do we differ?

Look at Hebrews 10:19

4. Take time to reflect on what we should be like as priests who “have confidence to enter into the most holy place by the blood of Jesus.”

