

Newport and Lower Wye Circuit
Service at home: Sunday 9th June 2024

From Now On – The Greatest Showman

Preparation

Our opening song describes an epiphanic moment where the lead character in the film The Greatest Showman decides to change his life. Those that have benefited from his worldly success are not so happy with this change – they are going to lose their golden egg laying chicken.

Think back on some of the defining moments in your life. They are key decisions, events or tragedies that changed everything for you. The effect of these key moments, or tipping points, can be positive or negative. Getting a bad health diagnosis or being offered your dream job can both be defining moments.

This written service will reflect on how knowing Jesus Christ and having faith in His promise of redemption and renewal, can change your life both here on earth and in eternity.

Opening Request

Loving God, open our hearts to your Word and make us receptive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Give us the humility to know that we do not have all the answers and that your ways are beyond our understanding.

We pray that through the risen Christ we share in your offer of a life worth living, both now and in life everlasting. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

Hymn: [Defining Moment](#)

YouTube hymn by Newsong

Kim Fabricius has included many prayerful poems in his book, Propositions on Christian Theology^(Fabricius, 2008) and I would like to offer one of them that fits well with defining moments and adoration of God. Here it is.

Prayer

God of all ages, ageless Lord,
whose thoughts are deep, whose love is broad,
we of all ages offer praise
throughout the length of all our days.

We praise you for our wondrous birth,
formed from your breath and blessed earth,
shaped in the womb by your own hand-
miracle! -who can understand?

We praise you for the years of youth,
time to explore the realms of truth,
stretching our muscles and our minds,
testing new models of mankind.

We praise you for our grown-up years,
with their demands, their joys and fears;
taking the world you give in trust,
working to make it fair and just.

We praise you for retiring age,
as we approach life's final page;
still things to do, still sights to see,
but, most of all, we learn to be.

This is our life, from birth to death,
from infant's cry to final breath;
this is our life, our gift to you,
who gave it first, who'll make it new.

Amen

Hymn: [I have decided to follow Jesus](#)

YouTube hymn

READING: [2 Corinthians 4:13-5.1](#) (ESV)

READING: [Mark 3:20-35](#) (The Message)

Reflection

Have you ever been convinced about something you wanted to do in life, but everyone else was advising against it? Going against the best advice of friends and family is hard and it reminds me of my decision over 30 years ago to move to Wales. I was working in R&D in Sheffield, had a great group of friends and was being trained to take over one of the department manager positions.

When I told my friends I had accepted a transfer to Port Talbot steelworks in a junior technical position, they thought I was mad and couldn't understand my decision. My family in Manchester thought they would not see me so often if I relocated; they didn't really want me to go. **But the more people told me I was making a mistake, the more I wanted to do it just to prove them wrong.**

I can look back now and see that the decision to move to Wales was truly a positive defining moment in my life. I made lots of new friends, had early promotion into more senior jobs, met my future wife, Andrea, had two lovely daughters and became a Lay Preacher. **My life had changed forever.**

Jesus living out His purpose

In our gospel reading many of those who knew Jesus thought he was making a mistake in trying to subvert established norms and power structures. Preaching the Good News about the kingdom of God was going to get him in trouble with both the Roman authorities and Judaic hierarchy.

They all thought his mission to heal the sick, give sight to the blind and set prisoners free was the wrong career choice.

His family were trying to protect Jesus when they tried to take him away. They made the

excuse for Him that He was **'out of his mind'** and didn't know what he was doing. They just wanted him safe and would have loved for him to continue a quiet carpenter's life.

The legal experts who had arrived from Jerusalem took a different approach and tried to discredit Him. They told the crowd **"He's possessed by Satan, the prince of demons. That's where he gets the power to cast out demons."**

Even his loyal disciples and his other followers were a bit unsure about the path Jesus had decided to take. Especially when he appeared to disown his family, telling the crowd **"Look, these are my mother and brothers. Anyone who does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."**

But no one was going to convince Jesus to turn from his path. From the moment the dove descended on Jesus in the Jordan, his destiny was set... **'this is my son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased'** Matthew 3:17.

Paul the Apostles defining moment

The Apostle Paul was very familiar with life changing defining moments, his happened on the Road to Damascus. His life was turned upside down following a personal encounter with Jesus. He turned away from being chief persecutor of the followers of Jesus and spent the rest of his life travelling to gentile nations to tell people about the greatness of God and the Good News of Jesus.

There are three bits of Good News in the reading from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians.

Life after death

Firstly, Paul tells us that the God who raised Jesus will **'raise us also with Jesus and bring us into his presence'**.

The promise of eternal life is not like an escape pod, where we disconnect from the world and wait to be whisked away to paradise. It is meant to start here on earth. Jesus when praying to God makes this clear when referring to Himself **“You gave him authority over everyone so that he could give eternal life to everyone you gave him. This is eternal life: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent.”** *John 17:2*

Knowing God, through Jesus is for us to grasp now, in this life on earth. Eternity starts the moment you believe and have faith in God’s promises.

Renewal and restoration

Secondly, the lived experience of Paul is that even as we experience our physical bodies wasting away our **‘inner self is being renewed day by day’**.

I take great comfort in this verse as I see my own body becoming more disabled because of MS. The way my condition has slowed me down has given more time for God to work his purpose out. I build silence into every day which helps me hear God. I also try and keep present to the many small blessings that fill my life.

This has allowed the Holy Spirit to work on my inner being, the part of us that Paul refers to in this verse. The **‘inner being’** describes what we sometimes call the soul, or in a secular context our ‘true self’. It is this part of us – the God part – that is being renewed day by day.

A future of incomparable joy

Thirdly, Paul tells us that believers can expect an **‘eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison’** and that this smothered the tragedies and sufferings in this life on earth. I don’t think he is belittling the suffering that

we experience; it is more about being able to endure all things with the prize of eternity in our hearts. **‘We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen’**.

For Paul it was all about changing your perspective, keeping your eyes on Jesus and not on things that will not last. It is ironic, when you do this and put your own mortal life into this perspective, you can truly start to live like never before. I can testify to this in my own life.

God has taken my mustard seed of faith and given me an eternal perspective on my health struggles. I think the blessing comes from a quiet, calm assurance that there is something bigger than your own life. **I can’t remember ever feeling so joyful, grateful and blessed as I do now.**

Make following Jesus your defining moment

If anyone reading this today needs to start a new chapter in their life, then make following Jesus your defining moment. Even if you are already a Christian, the decision to follow Jesus must be made daily.

When we decide to follow Jesus, it is a defining moment, not just for our lives but will have a positive impact on those we know and the wider community. Scripture tells us when we have faith in Jesus we are born again, we become a new creation, our hearts of stone are replaced with hearts of flesh, we become children of the living God and experience joy and peace in this life on earth and in life everlasting.

Amen

Hymn: [I Know Who Holds Tomorrow](#)

YouTube hymn, The Petersens

Prayer

Compassionate God, may we freely and unconditionally share love until all nations and all peoples can rest in your joy and peace. We know in our world today that millions have had their joy taken away by war, violence, and conflict.

May your word be like a guidance beacon in the hearts of those world leaders who have the power to move us on a path to peace.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We think of those we know who are going through difficulties. Suffering from bereavement, illness, or poor health. We take a few minutes to silently name those we know who need your care and comfort.

Lord in your mercy.

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

Blessing

May God surround you.

May Jesus hold you.

May the Spirit fill you.

Try this ... breathe the blessing taking slow deliberate breaths.

Inbreath – God, *outbreath* – surround me.

Inbreath – Jesus, *outbreath* – hold me.

Inbreath – Spirit, *outbreath* – fill me.

References

Fabricius, K. (2008). *Propositions on Christian Theology*. Carolina Academic Press.