**Salendine Nook Baptist Church – Church Together**

**Sunday 30th March 2025 – Friendship That Is Fair - Weathered**

In today’s service we will be looking at: **Psalm 55 v. 1 - 23**

The theme for our service today is: **Friendship That Is Fair - Weathered**

We hope that you will be able to engage with everything that has been produced for this service and that you would be able to **Be A Friend To Others Through Good Times As Well As Hard Times!**

**Welcome & Introduction**

Mothering Sunday gives us the opportunity to show our appreciation for our mothers and for all those who have cared for us, and to thank God for them.

In today’s service we will be thinking about ‘Fair - Weather Friends’, and that Jesus doesn’t abandon us when the going gets tough.

A reminder to us that God cares for individuals and families, all of the time.

**Call To Worship**

**Responsive Reading (Based on Psalm 34)**

**Leader:** Proclaim with me the Lord's greatness.

**All:** ***Let us praise his name together.***

**Leader:** I will always thank the Lord; I will never stop praising him.

Proclaim with me the Lord's greatness.

**All:** ***Let us praise his name together.***

**Leader:** I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me, He freed me from all my fears.

Proclaim with me the Lord's greatness.

**All:** ***Let us praise his name together.***

**Leader:** The helpless call to him, and he answers, He saves them from all their troubles.

Proclaim with me the Lord's greatness.

**All:** ***Let us praise his name together.***

**Leader:** Find out for yourself how good the Lord is; Happy are those who find safety with Him.

Proclaim with me the Lord’s greatness.

**All:** ***Let us praise his name together.***

**Prayers For All Those Who Care For Us**

Father God, we thank you for those who have cared for us; for our mothers who brought us into this world; for all who have helped to feed and clothe us; for those who have looked out for danger and kept us safe; for those who have stretched our imaginations, challenged us and enabled us to grow into the people we are today. We thank you Lord.

We pray for those who are caring for children now. Help them to provide a secure and loving home where trust can both grow and develop. Give them the strength to be faithful encouragers when things are tough and give them wisdom, so that those in their care will grow into the people you want them to be.

**Amen.**

**Song Suggestion**

All I Once Held Dear Built My Life Upon

**Moment Of Reflection**

True friendship isn’t about being there when it’s convenient. It’s about being there when it’s not.

**Mothering Sunday**

Mothering Sunday historically was an opportunity to visit the mother church, for people living away from home, who wished to return to visit the mother church, to visit family, to visit their mother, maybe even with a Simnel cake in hand. It can be good to return home and reconnect with one’s roots and family. Why not take a moment to reflect on your roots and family and the visits you have made ‘home’, both good and bad. Take time to give thanks for good times and take time to seek forgiveness for difficult visits.

Mothering Sunday has over many years become an opportunity to give thanks for mothers, and to celebrate the caring, the giving, the sacrificial qualities of mothers, mothering, and motherhood. We often think of these in the light of the narratives of Biblical women, like Miriam and Mary that can be found in Bible passages, such as **Exodus 2 v. 1 - 10** and **John 19 v. 25 - 27**. In quietness take a moment to read these passages and reflect on their love and care in difficult circumstances, it wasn’t easy to be Moses’ mother or Jesus’ mother. Take time to give thanks for your own mother, or the person who mothered you. If you’ve been a mother, take time to give thanks for your child / children.

As caring people, we are aware that for some Mothering Sunday is not an easy day. There will be those who never knew their mother’s love, there will be those who have lost their mother in tragic circumstances, or had a difficult relationship with their mother. There will be some who longed to be mothers themselves and were denied that opportunity, have been bereaved or had their children taken away. For a moment, take time to think of folk in these situations and offer up a prayer for comfort and healing from their pains and struggles. If this is your situation, pause to remember that you are loved and are being prayed for today, and take comfort in God’s love for you today.

Often, we think only of God as Father, but there are also many beautiful images of God as being portrayed with Motherly attributes in Scripture, and we finish with an image of God as a mother figure, as we can see in **Hosea 11 v. 3 - 4** which says: ‘Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I who took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them’. When thinking about this take some time to sit quietly and ponder on God’s love towards us as our Mother.

**Bible Reading**

**Psalm 55 v. 1 – 23 NIV**

1 Listen to my prayer, O God,

do not ignore my plea;

2 hear me and answer me.

My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught

3 because of what my enemy is saying,

because of the threats of the wicked;

for they bring down suffering on me

and assail me in their anger.

4 My heart is in anguish within me;

the terrors of death have fallen on me.

5 Fear and trembling have beset me;

horror has overwhelmed me.

6 I said, “Oh, that I had the wings of a dove!

I would fly away and be at rest.

7 I would flee far away

and stay in the desert;[c]

8 I would hurry to my place of shelter,

far from the tempest and storm.”

9 Lord, confuse the wicked, confound their words,

for I see violence and strife in the city.

10 Day and night they prowl about on its walls;

malice and abuse are within it.

11 Destructive forces are at work in the city;

threats and lies never leave its streets.

12 If an enemy were insulting me,

I could endure it;

if a foe were rising against me,

I could hide.

13 But it is you, a man like myself,

my companion, my close friend,

14 with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship

at the house of God,

as we walked about

among the worshipers.

15 Let death take my enemies by surprise;

let them go down alive to the realm of the dead,

for evil finds lodging among them.

16 As for me, I call to God,

and the Lord saves me.

17 Evening, morning and noon

I cry out in distress,

and he hears my voice.

18 He rescues me unharmed

from the battle waged against me,

even though many oppose me.

19 God, who is enthroned from of old,

who does not change—

he will hear them and humble them,

because they have no fear of God.20 My companion attacks his friends;

he violates his covenant.

21 His talk is smooth as butter,

yet war is in his heart;

his words are more soothing than oil,

yet they are drawn swords.

22 Cast your cares on the Lord

and he will sustain you;

he will never let

the righteous be shaken.

23 But you, God, will bring down the wicked

into the pit of decay;

the bloodthirsty and deceitful

will not live out half their days.

But as for me, I trust in you.

**Offering**

If you feel that you are able to, then please keep on giving to the work of the church here at Salendine Nook, with a generous and cheerful heart, praising God for all that he has given to you and share in the finances of the church.

**Song Suggestion**

Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine!

**A Prayer On Mothering Sunday**

Lord we pray on this Mothering Sunday for Mothers all over the world including our own. We pray for mothers where life is difficult, trying to protect their children in places of strife, famine, and war, for mothers despairing in poverty, for mothers facing illness or bereavement.

We give thanks for mothers and all their love and care. We give thanks for new mothers and pray for strength and grace in caring for their children.

We grieve for those who have not known their mothers, have had difficult relationships with their mother, or lost their mother. We pray for those who have been unable to be mothers or had opportunities to mother snatched from them.

Lord we pray your love and grace, comfort, and healing into all the places and situations it is needed.

**Amen**

**Church Together Thought**

The Green Bear wanted a friend, but he was rather choosy. He declined the offer of a girl Deer - well, boys don't want girls as friends - and so he set off to visit Master Pig who, he was told, might be able to help him. Just when he was feeling hungry, an Owl flew by and dropped an apple for him to eat. ‘What a kind, friendly thing to do,’ thought the Green Bear. The meeting with Master Pig was a disaster. Pig ran a business called 'Rent – a - friend' and offered the Green Bear ten minutes of his valuable time before going to meet some more important people. Feeling hurt and rejected, the Green Bear met the Owl once more.

He explained, 'I want a friend. Someone to play with,’ and was delighted with Owl's response: 'Can I be your friend?' Perhaps with Owl as a friend the Green Bear would learn that it is all right to have a girl Deer as a friend and the damage done by the Master Pig's rejection would be healed or repaired - we are not told.

*The Green Bear* was a Scripture Union video that helped generations of people to explore biblical principles and to identify issues that get in the way of true friendship. The issues include prejudices such as sexism and racism, fear of what others might think, ambition and a desire for status.

Like the Green Bear, however, most of us find Owls who do not want to be the fair - weather variety of friend. Even so, they and we are not perfect, and so we must accept each other warts and all.

Our sermon today is entitled: ‘Friendship that is Fair - Weathered’. So, what does that word ‘Fair-weathered friend’ mean? A fair – weathered friend is someone who is a good friend when it is easy to be one and who stops being one when you are having problems. A fair-weather friend isn’t someone who only comes around when the weather is pleasant, tempting as that may sound. This phrase is used to describe a person who’s friendly, supportive and present when everything in your life is going smoothly - when the weather is fair. But when the storms hit and you need them the most, they’re nowhere to be found. In short, a fair - weather friend is a person who is only your friend during good times.

Encouragement of each other is a vital part of Christian friendship and is something we can all do. One of the most painful experiences in life must be when a close friend lets us down. To be let down by those we have trusted with our innermost secrets leaves us with a range of emotions that are hard to handle, like those of intense grief.

The Psalmist in **Psalm 55** we are told in **v. 1, 2** felt overwhelmed, worn out and abandoned.

When he discovered the cause of his problem (**Psalm 55 v. 3**) he was crushed, terrified and could not control his body - it would not stop trembling (**Psalm 55 v. 5**). He wished that he could escape (**Psalm 55 v. 6, 7**) and then, perhaps, the problem would go away. But it would not. The Psalmist's reactions were typical of those who suffer the shock of betrayal (**Psalm 55 v. 12, 13**).

David, the Psalmist, called down judgement on his enemies, who had influenced his friend (**Psalm 55 v. 15**) and perhaps he remembered times when he too had let down those close to him, as referenced in **Psalm 51** and **2 Samuel 23 - 39**. Then he turned to a period of quieter prayer and told God what it was like having a close friend who gave mixed messages (**Psalm 55** **v. 20, 21**). Although he continued to struggle with the pain of what had happened to him (**Psalm55 v. 23**), he found some peace (**Psalm 55 v. 22**) when he decided to leave his troubles with the Lord.

In a sense he ‘let go’of what had happened to him and set out into the future, still bearing some of the pain but able to move on. To get to such a point often takes time, but the pattern for all of us who may feel betrayed will be similar. First comes the raw emotions that we must own. We might talk, write, cry or work them out of our system through physical activity. Only then can we reconsider what happened, think more clearly and decide what the most constructive and creative actions might be. God is there to support us through the pain of it all.

Have you ever been let down seriously by a friend? The Bible is realistic about the fact that even between best friends and even between Christian friends there are going to be times of difficulty in the relationship. **Psalm 55 v. 1 – 23** shows David crying out to God with brutal honesty about a friendship that has turned sour. What can we learn as a church then about how to handle friendships and friendships that might be fair - weathered?

**FRIENDSHIP UNDER PRESSURE**

What is your reaction when a friendship seems to be breaking down?

**ILLUSTRATION**

A safari expedition in Kenya went horribly wrong and left two friends running for dear life as a lion gained on them little by little. Suddenly one of them stopped, kicked off his boots, reached inside his rucksack for a pair of trainers and put them on. 'You're mad: shouted his companion. 'Not even a pair of running shoes will make you run faster than a lion.' 'I don't plan to run faster than the lion; panted the man as he caught up again. ‘I just plan to run faster than you.'

Do you wish you could walk away from the situation and escape the hurt, as the Psalmist suggests in **Psalm 55 v. 6 - 8**? Do you find yourself working out how you could get even, as we read in **Psalm 55 v. 15**? Do you poison your friend's reputation under the guise of 'Christian honesty', something that we see from **Psalm 55 v. 21**? Or is your reaction to take the whole problem to God with straightforward trust, as the Psalmist seemed to do in **Psalm 55 v. 22**?

All these attitudes are found in extreme form in this Psalm, but it is the final one which has the last word, as we read in **Psalm 55 v. 23b** which says: ‘But you, God, will bring down the wicked into the pit of decay; the bloodthirsty and deceitful will not live out half their days. But as for me, I trust in you’.

When we pray to the Lord about the betrayal of a friendship, we are praying to One who has known and understands the very real pain that it involves, as we read from the New Testament in **John 13 v. 21**.

**FRIENDSHIP THAT ENDURES**

Proverbs calls on us to cultivate friendship even when it is not easy to do so. For most of the world, one of the advantages of friendship is that one can immediately walk away from it when the going gets tough - unlike family or marriage ties. But the friendship of a Christian can stand out from that of others by demonstrating: That it is not dependent on getting something in return, so it can include the lonely or the poor (**Proverbs 19 v. 4, 6, 7**). That old arguments do not have to be dragged up again and again (**Proverbs 17 v. 9**). That the gossip of other people cannot unpick it (**Proverbs 16 v. 28**), and finally, that it can survive storms as well as fair weather (**Proverbs 17 v. 17**).

**FRIENDSHIP WITHOUT PRETENDING**

Christians need friends both inside and outside the church. Having friends who share our faith is a wonderful thing, because there is a shared foundation to the relationship. However, it is vital not to use our shared faith in Jesus as an excuse for treating friends in a way which presumes on their good nature. For David, the fact that they used to worship together only served to increase the hurt of his spoilt friendship, as recorded in **Psalm 55 v. 13, 14**.

And it is also important not to seek friendship outside the church with the sole intention of evangelising people, because the lack of integrity in that damages their perception of Christian love. One of Job's laments was that the only interest his friends took in him was to get him back on what they saw to be ‘the straight and narrow’, as we read in **Job 6 v. 14**.

Finally, **Ecclesiastes 4 v. 10 - 12** reminds us of the great value of friends who, without ulterior motives, are there for each other faithfully through good times and bad!

**Song Suggestion**

Dear Lord And Father Of Mankind

**Moment Of Reflection**

Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken. **Psalm 55 v. 22**

**Prayers Of Intercession**

Heavenly Father, as we celebrate and worship together today, we bring to you in the precious name of Jesus the needs of the church, the needs of the world, the needs of others around us and our own needs.

**We pray for the church:** for the way in which we can worship you in different ways; and for those who dare not celebrate you openly. We pray for Christians in countries where there is persecution and fear. Help them to know the loving presence of your Holy Spirit. Help us to be glad of your presence, and to rejoice in your Son. Give to us the help we need to be loyal and faithful as your church here on earth.

**We pray for peace in the world:** for countries where there is war; for places where there is hatred between races; for the leaders of nations. By your Holy Spirit among us may bitterness and hatred be cast out, and the peace and goodwill of your Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus, find a place in the hearts of all peoples.

**We pray for people in need:** for those who are ill, for the lonely and bereaved; for the refugee and the homeless; for the hungry and the poor. Be near to all who especially need your love today; let your Spirit be with those who care for them, and give to all of us the desire to help when and where we can.

**We pray for our family and our friends:** for those away from us today; for those who have asked for our prayers; for those that we are able to meet with and be with. In all of our life, in our giving and receiving, in all that we are able to do at this time, may we remember that we are part of your heavenly family here on earth.

**Finally, we pray for ourselves:** we ask for strength to serve others; we ask for deepening love; we ask for adventuring faith and a boldness of thought; we ask for a depth of courage to face the tasks ahead and we ask that you would be present in all the days that are ahead of us.

**Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father who art in Heaven

Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,

On earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

And forgive us our trespasses,

As we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation

But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power

And the glory, forever and ever.

**Amen**

**Song Suggestion**

How Deep The Father’s Love For Us

**Blessing**

Lord, would you be within us to strengthen us,

Without us to keep us, above us to protect us,

Beneath us to uphold us, before us to direct us,

Behind us to keep us from straying,

Around about us to defend us,

Blessed be your Holy name,

O Lord our Father,

For ever and ever.

**Amen**