



Worship at Home : 14th June



MHA Sunday Service 14th June 2020

This service has been adapted from material provided by MHA.

Psalm 66:1-4

- ¹ Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth;
² sing the glory of his name;
give to him glorious praise.
³ Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!
Because of your great power, your enemies
cringe before you.
⁴ All the earth worships you;
they sing praises to you,
sing praises to your name."



Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising,
give me joy in my heart, I pray ;
give me joy in my heart, keep me praising,
keep me praising till the break of day :
*Sing hosanna ! Sing hosanna !
Sing hosanna to the King of kings !
Sing hosanna ! Sing hosanna !
Sing hosanna to the King !*

Give me peace in my heart, keep me loving,
give me peace in my heart, I pray ;
give me peace in my heart, keep me loving,
keep me loving till the break of day :

Give me love in my heart, keep me serving,
give me love in my heart, I pray ;
give me love in my heart, keep me serving,
keep me serving till the break of day :

Introduction

Today is MHA Sunday and it is an opportunity to give thanks and reflect on the support given to over 18,500 older people through MHA's care homes, retirement living schemes and community groups. Together with 7,000 staff and over 4,000 volunteers and countless

supporters, MHA ensures that older people are able to live later life well. MHA's vision is for people to find meaning and hope in later life, to tackle loneliness and isolation by facilitating community, and for people to continue to learn and grow in their faith, or indeed rediscover faith. MHA seek do to this through their chaplaincy service, providing spiritual care for residents, their families and for their staff. MHA also provides music therapy for people living with dementia, helping to alleviate the common symptoms of dementia, such as anxiety. They also work in the community, partnering with the church to reach out into our communities to ensure that loneliness and isolation does not have to be part of growing old.

The theme this year is kindness, inspired by the kindness of MHA's staff, volunteers and supporters shown daily to those in later life. This links to the book of Ruth, where Ruth becomes a blessing to her mother-in-law, and in turn they both are blessed.

Ruth showed kindness to her mother-in-law and found blessing in doing so.

Kindness is a choice we make. And it's not always an easy choice; it can sometimes be quite tough. But the more we practise it, the more of a habit it will become. Imagine if everyone showed kindness, imagine what our church would be like, what our community would be like and imagine what school would be like or our work places.

We can pray and ask God to give us opportunity and the strength to show kindness.



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Let us pray,

God of all that is, we praise you for your goodness and your kindness that you bestow on your people. Throughout your word we read stories of the lowly being lifted up and the outsiders being included. Your love is for all people and knows no bounds. You showed your ultimate love by coming amongst us as one of us, leaving behind all heavenly splendour to experience the joys and hurts, highs and lows, laughter and tears, hopes and disappointments of humanity. Yet you remained obedient and full of love, and lived, served and died for us. You were raised from the dead and offer us everlasting life. And so we declare your holiness, majesty and beauty that radiates from all that is around us. And we, along with all creation, shout praise to you. Glory, power and praise be given to you, O God.

As we recognise your goodness and love, all that you have given to us, in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and your continued presence through your Holy Spirit, we recall in our minds the things we do, think and say that fall short of all that you call us to be.

As we reflect on kindness, and remember you and your words, and our experience of the past days, forgive us for the times when we have chosen not to be kind, and times when we missed an opportunity to offer kindness. We think of our relationships, those close to us we have let down; those whose names we might not even know, but to whom we could have been kinder; the world we inhabit and the needs of this planet and ways in which we have been unkind in caring for it.

Silence

Lord, forgive us, and renew us in the power of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you.

We give thanks for your faithfulness to us. For the outpouring of your love and grace and for all that you have promised to us. For your love that has guided us through life, and will continue to be with us. We give thanks for communities of kindness, where all are included and made to feel welcome. We give thanks for individuals who through their words and actions are a blessing to those they meet. We thank you that you call us to be part of your Kingdom in the here and now, and that

you choose to work through us so that others too may be blessed.

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.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.

Amen.



When I needed a neighbour, were you there,
were you there ?
When I needed a neighbour, were you there ?

*And the creed and the colour and the name
won't matter, were you there ?*

I was hungry and thirsty, were you there, were
you there ?

I was hungry and thirsty, were you there ?

I was cold, I was naked, were you there, were
you there ?

I was cold, I was naked, were you there ?

When I needed a shelter, were you there,
were you there ?

When I needed a shelter, were you there ?

When I needed a healer, were you there, were
you there ?

When I needed a healer, were you there ?

Wherever you travel I'll be there, I'll be there,
wherever you travel I'll be there.

*And the creed and the colour and the name
won't matter, I'll be there.*

Sydney Carter (1915–2004)



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Ruth 2:1-13

Ruth Meets Boaz

2 Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband's side, a prominent rich man, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. ² And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone in whose sight I may find favor." She said to her, "Go, my daughter." ³ So she went. She came and gleaned in the field behind the reapers. As it happened, she came to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. ⁴ Just then Boaz came from Bethlehem. He said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you." They answered, "The LORD bless you." ⁵ Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "To whom does this young woman belong?" ⁶ The servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, "She is the Moabite who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab." ⁷ She said, 'Please, let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the reapers.' So she came, and she has been on her feet from early this morning until now, without resting even for a moment."

⁸ Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Now listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. ⁹ Keep your eyes on the field that is being reaped, and follow behind them. I have ordered the young men not to bother you. If you get thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn." ¹⁰ Then she fell prostrate, with her face to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favour in your sight, that you should take notice of me, when I am a foreigner?" ¹¹ But Boaz answered her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. ¹² May the LORD reward you for your deeds, and may you have a full reward from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge!" ¹³ Then she said, "May I continue to find favour in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, even though I am not one of your servants."



May the mind of Christ my Saviour
live in me from day to day,
by his love and power controlling
all I do or say.

May the word of God dwell richly
in my heart from hour to hour,
so that all may see I triumph
only through his power.

May the peace of God my Father
rule my life in everything,
that I may be calm to comfort
sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me,
as the waters fill the sea ;
him exalting, self forgetting —
this is victory.

May I run the race before me,
strong and brave to face the foe,
looking only unto Jesus
as I onward go.

Katie Barclay Wilkinson (1859–1928)

Sermon

There is so much in life that we don't have control over, like the weather. There's so much that happens to people, to you and me, all the time, that aren't under our control.

We grow old, we can't control that. Even so, there is huge business for those who want to buy into looking younger. No matter how much we spend, or how many products we use, we grow old and at some point in our lives we rely on other people to help us.

One thing we all welcome, and one thing we can all choose to give, is kindness. When you pass a stranger, give them a smile. Or help someone carry their shopping, or let someone out in front of you when you are driving, or buying a homeless person a hot drink.

There are so many daily, small acts of kindness, and when we see it, it gives us hope against the backdrop of continuous bad news stories that fill our screens. There are ordinary people, all of the time, going out of their way to show kindness to others.



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Kindness is not only a good thing to do, it has other benefits too.

Studies have shown that if you perform just one random act of kindness a day you will not only reduce your stress, anxiety and depression but your body is flooded with the same hormones that make you and the person you helped calmer, healthier and happier.

The story of Ruth is about kindness. It is about being a blessing, but in turn being blessed.

In the book of Ruth, Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, had moved to Moab from Judah with her husband and two sons. Her husband died and so Naomi was left with her two sons, who married Ruth and Orpah. Ten years on, the sons died too. Naomi chooses then to go home back to Judah.

Ruth, Orpah and Naomi become widows. Now in ancient times being widowed brings with it a great deal of vulnerability. As such the Torah taught that widows ought to be treated with honour and compassion and offered protection so that no one takes advantage of them.

In ancient times if a widow has no heir to carry on the family line then not only does she have no husband to provide for her and protect her, but there is no one to care for her in old age. She may have even been considered a disgrace to her family and left in a precarious position.

God recognises the widow's plight and rises to her defence. Psalm 68:5 says, "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling." How blessed will the orphaned and the widowed be in God's house.

Naomi tells her daughters-in-law to go back to their families, to return home and kisses them goodbye. Orpah returns home, back to her family, back to her own country, her own culture. But Ruth decides to stay with Naomi, going to a foreign land, choosing a way of life where there is no recognition, no promise of a better future, and she goes as far as saying to her mother-in-law; "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God my God." (Ruth 1:16)

What an amazing statement, what powerful words of commitment and loyalty. She didn't owe Naomi anything; she didn't need to say

that. But saying that in her condition is even more powerful, so kind, so loving. Here is a grieving young woman choosing to honour, care for, and be with her older, widowed mother-in-law.

One MHA retirement living resident tells how she became widowed, and like Naomi also experienced her own homecoming. Because of the warmth and the kindness of the staff, volunteers and the chaplain, she immediately felt a sense of belonging that she was home, that this is where God wants her to be. She feels so blessed that she is able to keep in touch with her faith, and believes that God has led her to this place. Now she wants to give something back, for example baking for others and flower arranging. She knows blessing because of her faith, but also because of the kindness that has been given to her, through the care she receives, the community she has found, and in her turn she is a blessing to others.

Back to the Ruth we read about in the Bible. At harvest time, widows, together with foreigners and the fatherless, could glean in the fields of grain and gather left overs. Deuteronomy 24:19, "When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands."

Ruth is a widow and a foreigner, and it is through this act of gleaning that Ruth is introduced to Boaz. Boaz as it turns out is a distant relative of Naomi. We see in the reading that Boaz is acting according to the law laid out in Deuteronomy, but more than that, he has taken a deeper interest in Ruth. He shows abundant kindness to her. And as we go through the short book, we find that Ruth marries Boaz, they have a child Obed, who becomes the father of Jesse, who becomes the father of David and the line follows to Jesus (Matthew 1).

What an amazing story! A desolate widow, Naomi, is offered unswerving and selfless devotion by her widowed daughter-in-law, and kindness is bestowed upon them by Boaz. Individuals are blessed and become a blessing to others. They are blessed and are a blessing.



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Naomi moves from despair to happiness, from emptiness to fullness, from destitution to security and hope.

MHA's hope is to see people moving from loneliness into community, finding a sense of belonging. Whether that is part of a community group, in one of the care homes or retirement living, they are enabled to live later life with hope and meaning.

Each of us can know something of that blessing which Naomi experiences, through our own relationship with God and one another, in the life of our church and in our communities. There is great joy in knowing that you are blessed.

Each of us is known, loved and held by a kind and gracious God, who seeks us out and calls us by our name. A God who shows us through Ruth, that being part of the kingdom of God is not decided by your birth, or your parents, but it is through joining in with God's purpose and will. That in that joining in, we can know blessing and be a blessing.

Ruth – young, foreign, destitute, a widow.
Boaz – middle aged, well-to-do Israelite, securely established in his home community.

Both offering themselves in selfless acts of kindness, through their blessing of Naomi, in their care for her, and as she journeys from emptiness to fullness. Ruth and Boaz too find blessing themselves, becoming part of the genealogy of Jesus.

MHA staff and thousands of volunteers and supporters give blessings every day of the year to those in later life, to those who feel lonely, to those who are frail, and those who are confused. For over 75 years, MHA have sought to bless those in later life, through the care they give, in supporting their spiritual needs through chaplaincy, through music therapy for people living with dementia, and through facilitating and reducing loneliness and isolation in our communities.

Through your support of MHA you become part of this blessing too.

We are blessed, we become a blessing.

This MHA Sunday, will you join in having an impact on those in later life? What blessing can you be today? What act of kindness might

you choose to do? Could you hold someone's hand in their time of great need?

You might choose to pick up the phone to an elderly relative, or pop in to see a neighbour living on their own.

Will you also consider supporting MHA – through a donation, either as a one off or a regular donation? Or even as a gift in your will? Or through giving your time by volunteering at your local home or scheme, or by becoming a representative and championing MHA in your church and community?

There are so many ways to be a blessing to those in our families, in our churches, and in our communities who are lonely, and in need. There are plenty of Naomis out there, wanting to move from emptiness to fullness, wanting a friend, wanting someone's hand to hold through difficult times, wanting somewhere to belong.

What part can you play in showing God's blessing to those in need?

May we know the blessing of the God of Ruth and Naomi, and may we be a blessing to others by what we do and what we are able to give.

Amen.



Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you ;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road ;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear ;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping ;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you ;
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven
we shall find such harmony,



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born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you ;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.

Richard A. M. Gillard (b. 1953)

Let us pray.

Lord God, we bring before you our prayers for
the world. For its leaders and for those people
and places where hope is diminished and
peace can feel elusive.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for our nation and for our community.
We pray for the work of MHA and all who
champion the cause of those in later life. We
pray for decision makers involved in social
care. We give thanks for carers, volunteers
and supporters who enable MHA do what it
does and has been doing for the past 77
years. We pray for those caring for loved ones
at home; give to them strength and patience.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for the young and old. For those who
feel lonely and isolated. We pray for those who
are going through great changes. Those
starting work, moving home, and those moving
in to care homes or retirement living, may they
find a sense of belonging. We pray for those
who can't keep up with change and who feel
lost or disillusioned.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who are suffering. For those
who are widowed, for families who have lost a
loved one. For those who are frail and in need,
and for those who struggle to get the care they
need. We pray for those in our community and
those known to us...

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord God, hear our prayers, those spoken and
those on our hearts. May you show us how to
be an answer to our prayers, and may you use
us as catalysts of your love, blessing and
kindness to others.

In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.



Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
there is no shadow of turning with thee ;
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail
not ;
as thou hast been thou for ever wilt be :

*Great is thy faithfulness ! Great is thy
faithfulness !
Morning by morning new mercies I see ;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided.
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.*

Summer and winter, and springtime and
harvest,
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love :

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to
guide ;
strength for today and bright hope for
tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside !

Thomas O. Chisholm (1866–1960)

Blessing

May the blessing of the God of Ruth and
Naomi, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, remain
with us now and always.

Send us out equipped by your Spirit to live out
your blessing and kindness.

In the name of Christ.
Amen.

