

## TUESDAY COMMUNION

**Hymn:**

**Reading:** James 3.13-18

**Prayers:**

The principal of Wesley House in Cambridge was Gordon Rupp who was also Dixie (Senior) Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the university.

At the time he was renowned as one of the finest lecturers and preachers, not to mention being a former President of the Methodist Conference.

He told the story of how each day he bought his copy of the Guardian from a particular newsstand, dressed in his usual collar and tie. One day, he had to take a funeral and went to the newsstand wearing his clerical collar." My goodness," said the paper seller. "I always thought you worked at the butchers."

Gordon Rupp's family didn't have the money to send their son to university. He left school to work in a bank and it was only when he began to train for the Methodist Ministry that he began that academic life which brought him great honour. Yet, there was nothing arrogant in the man. A great wit, the stories he told were often against himself.

One story I always remember was about when he was President of the Methodist Conference. He was visiting a small town and had a meal with the minister. He went into his study and saw that on his shelves there were only a few books. In the service that evening, the minister proved to be of the more rambling kind and clearly no great intellectual.

He made up his mind that here was a minister who wasn't much use.

When he was having the ritual cup of tea in the hall afterwards a woman came up to him and said, "Haven't we got a wonderful minister. Every day when I was ill he would pop in for a few minutes, just to make sure I was alright and to pray with me."

Gordon Rupp would speak of how that woman, though she did not know it, spoke words of rebuke to his soul.....

There are many patterns of ministry and not all involve great academic prowess. Gordon Rupp had the humility to tell the story against himself.

James would have approved!

"Who among you is wise or clever?"

Let his right conduct give proof of it, with the modesty that comes of wisdom."

Modesty wasn't highly regarded in the ancient world and often isn't regarded as a virtue in our go getting world today.

Someone once praised Clement Atlee in the presence of Winston Churchill by saying that Atlee was a “a very modest man”. “He’s got a great deal to be modest about!” was the growled response.

But modesty is not about being a doormat. It has been described as “strength under control”, about a person being disciplined in the use they make of the gifts with which they have been born and the gifts they have acquired.

For James, one of the signs that a person’s strength was under control was their ability to live a life which reflected the character of Christ.

He speaks of such a person being “straightforward and sincere, rich in mercy and in the kindly deeds that are its fruit.” Such people are not arrogant, looking down on those around them, refusing to listen to what others have to say, scornful of those less able or less knowledgeable than themselves.

Instead, there is an openness and a generosity of spirit.

Caroline listened to the chair of the Buxton Festival, Dame Janet Smith, speaking at the Opera House on Saturday and you may have heard the broadcast of her preaching at St. John’s

She’s clearly got a formidable intelligence and is someone who is known and recognised, yet Caroline spoke of her humanity and honesty.

We pray for those who are in a position to teach others that they may not flaunt their cleverness or use it as a means to dominate and control others.

And we pray for ourselves, for we are all sometimes in positions of strength and we ask that our strength may always be under the control of the love of Christ that our words and deeds may reflect his nature and his love.

Amen.