**Service 10th May 2020**

**Welcome and opening words**

Welcome to Church on the week commencing the 10th May!

We come to worship the Living God in Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Wherever we are, however we feel, we come to gather united by the presence of the Jesus to offer praise and thanks to Him today! Some words from Revelation 5:13:

**“13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing, “To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever!””** (Revelation 5:13 - NRSV)

Let us sing like those did in John’s vision in Revelation chapter 5:

**Song: Before the throne of God above**

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| 1.. Before the throne of God aboveI have a strong and perfect plea,a great High Priest whose name is Love,whoever lives and pleads for me.My name is graven on His hands,my name is written on His heart;I know that while in heaven He standsno tongue can bid me thence depart,no tongue can bid me thence depart.  | 2.. When Satan tempts me to despair,and tells me of my guilt within,upward I look and see him therewho made an end to all my sin.Because my sinless Saviour died,my sinful soul is counted free;for God the just is satisfiedto look on Him and pardon me,to look on Him and pardon me. |
| 3.. Behold Him there! The risen lamb,my perfect spotless righteousness;the great unchangeable I AM,the King of glory and of grace!One with Himself I cannot die,my soul is purchased with His blood;my life is hid with Christ on high,with Christ my Saviour and my God,with Christ my Saviour and my God.  | Charlie L Bancroft (1841 – 1892) ccli 169737  |

**Time of prayer – praise**

Father God, as a parent loves their child, so you love your children.

We come before You in song, prayer and in the reading and reflecting on Your Word in the Bible. We come with words and we come in silence to offer You our praise but also to receive from You in this time we share together united in the presence of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We come and praise You for Your creation. For the world we can enjoy and for the beauty of each of the seasons. We praise You, Lord.

We come and praise You for the beauty of each other. For the differences between us and the differing gifts You give to each of us. May we never take them for granted but always give You thanks and praise for them.

We come and praise You for all you have given to us and all that we enjoy day by day. For food, drink, and all that we enjoy. May we never take these things for granted but always give thanks and praise for them.

We come and praise You for Jesus. Who changed, changes and will continue to change lives.
From the 12 disciples Jesus called to follow him to the millions and millions of followers around the world today. We give you thanks and praise.

Amen.

**Bible Reading: Colossians 3:1-17 - Rules for Holy Living**

1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears,

then you also will appear with him in glory. 5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. 11 Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Thanks be to God for His Word.

**Hymn: What kind of love is this**

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| 1..What kind of love is this,that gave itself for me?I am the guilty one,yet I go free.What kind of love is this?A love I’ve never known.I didn’t even know His name,what kind of love is this. | 2.. What kind of man is this,that died in agony?He who had done no wrongwas crucified for me.What kind of man is this,who laid aside His thronethat I might know the love of God?What kind of man is this? |
| 3.. By grace I have been saved,it is the gift of God.He destined me to be His son,such is His love.No eye has ever seen,no ear has ever heard,nor has the heart of man conceived,what kind of love is this. | Bryn and Sally Haworth © 1983 Signalgrade/Bells Music ccli 169737 |

**Part 1: “Taking off the old self”**An American poet and physician Oliver Wendell Holmes Senior (who lived in the latter part of the 19th Century (1809 – 1894) is quoted as saying:
**“Some people are so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly use.”**

You may have heard that quote used by people. But I think it contradicts what Paul says in the opening words of our reading that we heard/read a few moments ago. Paul says:

**“1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”**(Colossians 3:1&2 - NIV)

Let us not forget the context in which Paul writes. He is trying to correct a Church/group of Christians who were being led from the straight path of faith to what we mentioned last week: **“See to it that no-one takes you captive through *hollow and deceptive philosophy*, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”** (Colossians 2:8) [italics mine]

In other words, Paul is reminding his listeners/readers that they must look to God, in Jesus Christ, not on earthly things that can lead them/us astray.

Paul then helpfully lists for his listeners/readers what some of those earthly things might be…

**“Sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed which is idolatry”** (Colossians 3:5)

A list of things that Paul sees as “earthly” distractions for believers! Things that the Colossian Christians might be allowing to distract them from following Jesus.

It can be hard to correct people when we feel they are heading in the wrong direction or when they are about to make a decision that would not be good for them. You may have been in such a situation yourself when you have advised a family member or friend that a decision they are about to take would not be a wise move! (How did that make you feel?)

Equally you might be someone who has a friend/family member who has advised you against something in your life. (How did that make you feel?)

And Paul doesn’t stop with that list of “don’ts!” he goes on in verse 8:

**“8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips.”** Paul continues… **“Do not lie to each other...”** (v9)

It is not that Paul is somehow wanting to stop people having a good time in life. What he is encouraging people to do is to make sure they live and lead pure lives!

Often, we don’t really talk about “sex” in the Church. We seem somehow to back off from it – probably embarrassment! But (sadly) how often are unhealthy earthly thoughts/desires on sex the reason for marriages ending? For relationships breaking down? For couples and children being hurt?

All because, in some way, people have taken their eyes off Jesus (or to personalise it – we have taken our eyes off Jesus) and set them on earthly desires.

I wonder if there are things in our lives we need to confess to God? Times when we have set our minds too much on earthly things and not on heavenly things? When we have put self before God or self before others? Let us pray….

**Time of prayer – confession**

Forgiving God, we come before you in this moment. As this candle flickers it represents light that dispels the darkness of sing and wrongdoing. May the light of Jesus shine in us and shine through us. May is highlight those areas of weakness and frailty that is in me and in us all.

Forgive us when our minds, thoughts and desires have take our eyes off Jesus and on to our own desires. Cleanse us, renew us and restores us…

As part of our prayers I want to invite you to listen to a song that has some powerful words in it. It is called “I’m no longer a slave to fear” The original song is quite loud! So I have come across a quieter version…I hope and pray that you will allow the words to wash over you and flow through you….we listen as we pray….

**Song: I’m no longer a slave to fear (we watch/listen/read and reflect)**

You unravel me with a melody,

You surround me with a song

Of deliverance from my enemies
‘til all my fears are gone.

*I’m no longer a slave to fear,*

*I am a child of God.*

*I’m no longer a slave to fear,*

*I am a child of God.*

(Let us declare it to the nation, nation,

let us declare it to the nation.)

From my mother’s womb,

You have chosen me,
love has called my name.

I’ve be born again to a family,
the blood flows through my veins.

*I’m no longer a slave to fear,*

*I am a child of God.*

*I’m no longer a slave to fear,*

*I am a child of God.*

*I’m no longer a slave to fear,*

*I am a child of God.*

*I’m no longer a slave to fear,*

*I am a child of God.*

(Let us declare it to the nation, nation,

let us declare it to the nation.

We are free, we are free, we are free….)

Whoa, whoa

Whoa, whoa

Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa

Whoa,…

You split the sea so I could walk right through it,
you drown my fears in perfect love.
You rescued me so I could stand and sing,
I am a child of God.

You split the sea so I could walk right through it,

you drown my fears in perfect love.

You rescued me so I could stand and sing,

I am a child of God.

You split the sea so I could walk right through it,

you drown my fears in perfect love.

You rescued me so I could stand and sing,

I am a child of God.

I am a child of God.

I am a child of God.

Yes, I am a child of God.

Full of faith, yes, I am a child of God.

(Writer(s): Jonathan David Helser, Joel Case, Brian Mark Johnson, Bethel Music, 2015) ccli 169737

**A prayer…**

We thank you, that when we place our trust in you, we are Your children and you care for us with love that we can never fully fathom or grasp. We thank you and praise you. Amen.

**Part 2: “Putting on the new self”**

*Recently we painted our bedroom at the manse (when I say “we painted” I of course mean Ruth and Evie!). As part of that we had to empty our wardrobes of all the clothes so we could move them away from the wall.*

*In so doing…Ruth hadn’t realised just how many clothes I have! (to be honest I had forgotten as well!)*

*She said to me, “Why don’t you wear some of those newer/nicer clothes that you have in your wardrobe instead of some of these that are passed their best!”*

The truth is, I am not good at throwing away old clothes! In my mind they get demoted from:

\*best/going out clothes to \*everyday clothes to \*riding my bike clothes to \*my DIY clothes!

This ‘t’ shirt, for example, began life as a nice t shirt I wore for nicer occasions (albeit 15 or 20 years ago!)

In some ways what we explored in part 1 was the “old clothes” or, as Paul says: **“…since you have taken off your old self with its practices…”** (Colossians 3:9b)in other words when we become followers of Jesus we take off our old self (like a garment) we stop doing the things we used to do! In order that we can **“put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”** (Colossians 3:10)

When we become followers of Jesus we don’t necessarily change overnight! We don’t somehow become a perfect article – it takes time. Day by day, encounter by encounter Jesus through the Holy Spirit changes us and transforms us as we seek to clothe ourselves with: **“compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”** (Colossians 3:12b)

And Paul encourages his listeners to **“put on love which binds them all together in perfect unity.”** (Colossians 3:14) It is as if “love” is the glue which holds together the compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

May we allow God to re-clothe us in his image. May we allow God to change and transform us as we give more of ourselves to Him.

Let us pray….I want to invite you to close your eyes and hold out your hands in a posture of receiving…as I re-read the final three verses to you of this section of Paul’s letter…

**“15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in your richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word of deed, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”**

Amen.

**Song: Father of life draw me closer**

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| 1.. Father of life, draw me closer,Lord my heart is set on You:let me run the race of time,with Your life enfolding mine,and let the peace of God,let it reign. *(sung twice)*  | *Oh Lord I hunger, for more of You.**rise up within me, let me know Your truth.**oh Holy Spirit, saturate my soul,**and let the life of God, fill me now,**let Your healing power,**breathe life and make me whole.**and let the peace of God, let it reign.* |
| 2.. Oh Holy spirit, Lord my comfort;strengthen me, hold my head up high:and I stand upon Your truth,bringing glory unto You,and let the peace of God, let it reign.*(sung twice)* | *Oh Lord I hunger, for more of You.**rise up within me, let me know Your truth.**oh Holy Spirit, saturate my soul,**and let the life of God, fill me now,**let Your healing power,**breathe life and make me whole.**and let the peace of God, let it reign.* |
| Darlene Zschech © 1993 Wondrous Worship/Music Service/Song Solutions ccli 169737 |

Today marks the start of Christian Aid Week. For some of us we would usually receive an envelope through our doors. Some of us would deliver and collect them. We were able to give some money to the work of Christian Aid. But sadly this year we are unable to take part in the door to door collections. We can still give, however, if you want to at the Christian Aid website [www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk) or phone **020 7523 2046.**

**What we can all do even if we cannot give is to pray for the work of Christian Aid and we will do that in our time of prayer now as we lift to God those for who we are concerned.**

**Time of prayer – for others and ourselves**

Loving God, who cares for all people across the globe. We come before you and lift to you the work of Christian Aid. The money they usually raise will be severely hampered this year due to the fact the door to door collections cannot happen. We pray that you would move us, where possible, to give to the work of Christian Aid. May monies given help those places which will struggle to fight against Covid-19.

We pray for those who are sick in body, mind and spirit. We pray for the healing hand of God to rest upon them and give them the healing and wholeness you long to give them.

We pray for those who struggle with addictions, we pray that You, Lord, would deliver them and protect them.

We pray for those who struggle who are used, abused and trafficked in the world today. We pray for a release from the captivity of abuse and we pray for the love of Jesus to be shown to them by those charities that work to alleviate their suffering.

We pray for Your Church, Lord, that we may be a shining light in the darkness. A beacon of hope where there is despair. We pray that churches will prepare for the time when they can open their doors again and welcome people in.

We pray for ourselves. We pray that You would comfort and strengthen us in our faith. Help us to continue to learn more of You as we journey through the letter to the Colossian Church. May the words challenge us and comfort us in our lives today and give us hope for the future.

For we ask this prayer in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour.

Amen.

**Song: I, the Lord of sea and sky**

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| 1.. I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard My people cry. All who dwell in dark and sin, My hand will save. I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright. Who will bear My light to them? Whom shall I send?  | *Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?* *I have heard You calling in the night.* *I will go Lord, if You lead me.* *I will hold Your people in my heart.*  |
| 2.. I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people's pain. I have wept for love of them, they turn away. I will break their hearts of stone, Give them hearts for love alone. I will speak My word to them, Whom shall I send?  | *Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?* *I have heard You calling in the night.* *I will go Lord, if You lead me.* *I will hold Your people in my heart.* |
| 3.. I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame. I will set a feast for them, My hand will save Finest bread I will provide, Till their hearts are satisfied. I will give My life to them, Whom shall I send?  | *Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?* *I have heard You calling in the night.* *I will go Lord, if You lead me.* *I will hold Your people in my heart.* |
| From Isaiah 6 Daniel Schutte © 1981, 2000 OCP ccli 169737 |

**Final Prayer**

Loving God, by your empowering may we be children of light clothed in compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. May the Lord live in us and shine out through us by the power of the Holy Spirt. Amen.

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Thanks to those who have taken part in the service today. Thanks also to those who after my request last week have sent photos to me this week. Some, you may have noticed, appeared in the service today!