



Dore Methodist Church

Weekly Update

23rd October 2020.



Message from Gail.

News this week

- Sheffield goes into Tier 3 restrictions.
- President Macron speaks about the fight against terrorism after teacher killed in France
- Brexit talks come to an end.
- Planned attack on Olympic Games uncovered
- Trump and Biden feud over final debate topics.
- Covid: Burn-out fears of 'exhausted' unpaid carers.

These are just some of the headlines of the week and by the time you get to read this message, they will of course have been replaced by new ones. We now live in a world of 24hour news coverage. With the increase of modern technology we have an almost immediate visual record of what is happening and this affects the way we react resulting in heightened personal worries and anxieties.

Around the time Paul writes his letter to the relatively new Christians in Thessalonica they too had been affected by bad news. We know they found themselves under persecution, but we don't know for sure exactly what else had happened, but we do know that by writing this letter, Paul, Silvanus and Timothy sought to encourage them. As you read this week's passage (Chapter 2: 1-8) notice how the inspiration and reassurance, which is found in Chapter one, continues into the opening of this second chapter.

When you think of Paul, I wonder what image comes to your mind? How do you imagine him to be? Remember he was a persecutor of Christians, a Roman citizen and brought up in a brutal time. With this background, perhaps the first word to come to your mind wouldn't be "gentle," yet at the end of our reading this week we are pointed to just that quality. Referring back to the time he spent in Thessalonica he says; "*As a nursing mother we cared for you,*" (V 7) and through this picture which we can learn something about how strength comes from gentleness.

Strength is more typically portrayed as being about power, and about a determination to achieve one's own will regardless of others. Yet, on his website '[A Home for Gentle Rebels](#)' UK-based musician, writer and podcaster Andy Mort asserts that gentleness is strength because it remains constant and clear-minded across all manner of situations. He describes ways to develop strength founded in gentleness and the image of the nurse tenderly caring for children is a great picture of

gentleness. Yet that tender care requires strength and determination and sometimes even ‘tough love’.

We know how Paul, before he became a Christian, inflicted suffering; yet here, he speaks of the suffering and maltreatment he and his companions have been subjected to in following Jesus. This experience seems to have made Paul more empathic, and there is a central message here about self-giving to others. Self-giving in order to proclaim the gospel, and this is at the heart of Paul’s understanding of God in Christ.

This is a call to us in our own lives to love selflessly and be gentle as we show how deeply we care for others, and in turn be an example to our wider community and those in power. It challenges us to think about a different way of leading where there is strength in gentleness.

Gail.

Pause for thought and prayer



Ask the animals and they will teach you or the birds of the air and they will tell you.
(Job 12:7)

If you want to see some of nature’s most amazing bird spectacles, then this is the time of year to look out for the arrival of thousands of geese. Geese have a very particular way in which they fly to enable them to travel thousands of miles. They fly in a V formation, the flapping of the wings in this sequence causes an uplift which helps the following birds and they gain 71% more flying time than if they flew alone. There are a number of “leader” birds, who are able to handle turbulence and the leader is regularly rotated so when one gets tired another takes their place. The birds at the back also have an important role in “honking.” This noise encourages those up front to keep up their speed. Finally, when a goose gets injured or sick, two other geese will fall out of formation to stay with it till it can fly again. When resuming their flight, they work together to catch up with the rest of the flock.

I think there is some important things we can learn from these geese. We are able to discover in this illustration something about: The effectiveness of sharing a common direction; having a strong sense of community and helping one another; and when it comes to “honking” it’s important to note this is always an encouraging sound!

Prayer for the week: Loving God you are the wind upon my wings; you guide me in the right direction; provide shelter and support when I stop for rest and encourage me when I lose hope. Thank you Lord. Amen

Worship for 25th October.

Our worship material for this coming Sunday, 25th October, follows. As usual it has been prepared for us by "Twelvebaskets."

Church Magazine.

Doesn't time go quickly! We are now preparing our November/December Church Magazine and would be grateful to receive all your contributions. Let us have your thoughts, ideas, suggestions and recent experiences. All contributions to Bridget as soon as possible please.

Harvest appeal for All we Can.

Very grateful thanks to all who contributed to our special harvest collection for "All we Can". A total of £210 has been raised.

Shoebox Appeal.

Hopefully I will be collecting shoe boxes on Wednesday 11th November. As mentioned previously please place your box in a carrier bag and leave it at the front door. My contact details are Tel: 2369066 or email starratdore@googlemail.com Many thanks. *Daphne.*

Important Reopening Information

On Wednesday of this week the Government announced that the Sheffield Region would be moving into the very high-risk tier. The reason for this is to try to slow down the spread of coronavirus in the area by reducing our contact with other people. Within the new guidelines it is still possible for places of worship to remain open, providing that they follow all the necessary safety rules.

As announced recently we were planning to have two trial midweek services on Wednesdays 28th October and 4th November in church. **Given the new restrictions we are all facing, the Church Leadership Team have decided that it would not be sensible to go ahead with these services.**

We know that some people will be very disappointed at this cancellation, but the Leadership Team felt that as we had not already opened for worship it would be wrong to do so at a time when we are all being encouraged to restrict our contact with others. We do have a duty of care towards everyone who may have attended one of these services. However, we now have all the practical arrangements in place for re-opening and when the new restrictions are eased, we will announce our new plan for limited re-opening.

This has been a very difficult time having to balance desires to return to some form of normality and all the Government and Methodist rules and guidance. The Leadership Team have tried to steer a course that would keep us all safe and limit the spread of the virus. We would appreciate any comments from members of our church on the strategy we have followed and, in particular, how people now feel regarding a return to some form of worship together, obviously adhering to all the necessary guidance. Please give your views to any member of the team, listed below:

Gail, Bridget, Jackie, Eric, Nigel or John.

**Please send any items for our "Weekly Update" to the Baileys by TUESDAY evening.
Telephone: 2351085. Email: john.bailey23a@btinternet.com**

The Vine at Home – Sunday 25th October 2020 - 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Hymn: 439 STF - Abba, Father, let me be yours and your alone

Abba Father, let me be
yours and yours alone.
May my will forever be
ever more your own.
Never let my heart grow cold,
never let me go,
Abba Father, let me be
yours and yours alone.

Dave Bilborough (b. 1965) Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 439
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Opening Prayers

Parent God, we come to you with our hearts full of love. Love for our friends, for our family, for our church and for our community. We come, however, with the knowledge that we sometimes fail to open our hearts to those we find harder to love.

God, help us to love with open hearts.

We pray for our brothers and sisters in faith. We pray that they are safe and respected, whatever their faith.

God, help us to love with open hearts.

We pray for our country. For political divides and differences, and for communities ripped apart by conflict.

God, help us to love with open hearts.

We pray for marginalised communities who have been overlooked, taken for granted and received hostile, violent and prejudicial treatment.

God, help us to love with open hearts.

We pray for our church, for when it has not been a welcoming and safe space for all.

God, help us to love with open hearts.

We pray for ourselves. For when we have mistreated our mind, body or spirit and not felt worthy of love.

God, help us to love with open hearts.

Parent God, you give us two important commandments: to love you with all our heart and mind and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

As we worship today, help us open our hearts and fill our homes and communities with love and praise. **Amen.**¹

Let us now say the Lord's prayer

¹ Opening prayers written by Rachel Allison

Readings: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8 Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica

2 You yourselves know, brothers and sisters,^[a] that our coming to you was not in vain, **2** but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. **3** For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, **4** but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. **5** As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; **6** nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, **7** though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle^[b] among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. **8** So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.²

Matthew 22:34-46 The Greatest Commandment

³⁴ When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, ³⁵ and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" ³⁷ He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

⁴¹ Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: ⁴² "What do you think of the Messiah?^[a] Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." ⁴³ He said to them, "How is it then that David by the Spirit^[b] calls him Lord, saying, ⁴⁴ 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet"'? ⁴⁵ If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?" ⁴⁶ No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.³

Reflections on the readings

There is a moment, early on in *The Lord of the Rings* movies, where the wizard Gandalf is addressing the ageing hobbit, Bilbo Baggins. Bilbo, despite all the friendship, wisdom and council that Gandalf has offered him over many years, is becoming suspicious of the wizard's motives and believes he is trying to manipulate him.

Gandalf, finally fed up with the hobbit, bursts out,

'Bilbo Baggins, do not take me as a conjuror of cheap tricks. I am not trying to rob you...I'm trying to help you!'

It is a turning moment in the conversation, and Bilbo recognises something of his stupidity in mistrusting his old friend.

Perhaps this scene is well known to you, or perhaps not – but I expect you could recall a version of it from your own life or experience. So often, we find ourselves, like Bilbo, believing the worst even in people who only have our best interests at heart. Unlike Bilbo, we don't have the excuse that our judgement is being clouded by the presence of an evil magic ring...but perhaps we can relate to him.

², ³ Bible Text is from New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved

Gandalf loves Bilbo and is trying to give him advice that probably saves his life. Yet, even after all the respect Bilbo has for his mentor and friend, he momentarily mistakes his loving advice for a cheap trick, or even a malicious attempt to rob him. Have you ever done something like this: mistaken well-intentioned love or advice for manipulation? Or momentarily lost your trust in a friend you ought to have kept your faith in? Have others done it to you?

In many ways, it's not surprising that we behave like that. Yes, we might not be influenced by an evil magic ring, but we are affected by the way we have been treated in the past, and by the society we live in. Sadly, many of us will have been manipulated by someone who professed to love us, or fallen for a scam or con that began by appealing to our better nature. Sadly, not everyone who uses the word 'love', or even demonstrates a loving attitude towards us has our best interests at heart.

This seems to be exactly the attitude that Paul is warning against in today's reading – he is persuading the Thessalonians that his love for them and his desire to share God's love with them is not a clever trick. To put this verse into Gandalf's phrase, we might hear Paul saying: 'I'm not trying to trick you, I'm trying to love you.'

Love is at the beating heart of the Christian gospel. As we seek to follow Jesus and learn more about God's plans for our lives, we have to come to accept that we are loved, and learn how to love others. For some of us, this is difficult, as we wrestle with the imperfect models of love by which we have been affected. Perhaps we can relate to the character of Anna in another film – the modern children's classic, *Frozen*. She thinks she is falling in love with a dashing, gentle, caring prince...only to discover that he is not what he seems.

Despite all this, despite the hurt we carry, despite the broken nature of human-love, we strive to know more of God's love – this 'love divine, all loves excelling'. And we hear that clearly in Jesus' words today. In wrestling with the question of what is the 'greatest commandment', or the 'most important life advice', Jesus returns to two instructions, both of which centre on love.

Firstly, he echoes what his Jewish listeners would recognise from the Hebrew scriptures, this ancient instruction which Jews would have committed to memory and say regularly – 'love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind'.

It is this instruction to love God that helps us see beyond the way the world loves. It helps us move beyond the stories we have that compare with Anna in *Frozen* or Bilbo in *The Lord of the Rings*, where we are suspicious of love. In loving God, we come to see more of God's nature, God's love for us.

How do we express that love, or show that love? I would suggest that prayer is key. And I don't necessarily mean lots of flowery words. As Mother Teresa famously said when questioned about what she said when she prayed: 'I mostly listen'. And when the response came, what does God say to you in prayer, she replied: 'he mostly listens.' Perhaps it is this divine listening, this holy listening, this deep listening that we need to practice in order to come to know God more, to show our love for the divine.

And if we show this love for God then, as Jesus reminds us, we will come to love our neighbours as ourselves. We will discover that this big love, this divine love, wants to be shared, wants to touch other people's lives, wants to help heal the world.

It won't be easy. Love is rarely easy. When you offer love, some people will think you are manipulating them, or out to rob them, or have other, worldly intentions in mind. But that is a

reason to keep loving, to keep seeking to heal the world. And, when you are feeling tired, or burnt out, come back to the first commandment, come back to listening, come back to your loving relationship with your creator. Draw strength from that – strength for the next neighbour who needs your love.

It's worth ending with an aside that regularly accompanies interpretations of this passage. When Jesus says 'neighbour', we sometimes translate it in our minds to mean the person who lives either side of me, those in my street or – at most – my local community. But Jesus' vision of neighbourliness is much bigger and broader than that. Of course we are to show love to our actual, literal neighbour – but the call doesn't end there. This is an invitation into a global neighbourhood, where we recognise all people and indeed all of creation as part of God's big village. Can we love across borders? Across the boundaries of race, wealth, class, gender, language, background, sexuality and religion? That, truly, is a love divine, all loves excelling.

To love is to get hurt, to get bruised. We will feel people's pain with them, and we will feel pain when they reject us, let us down, or seek to manipulate our love for their own ends. But we will dust ourselves off. We will nurse our wounds. And we go again.

Our world is crying out for more love, for a better kind of love. As the church of Jesus Christ, let's show them what the word means. All we need is love.⁴

Prayers of intercession

Living God, we come to you, the church of 2020 here in this place. We come to invite you to show us how to be your people today. In a world that regards the church as irrelevant or outdated, *Show us how to love, guide us by your Spirit.*

Living God, we hear the cry of injustice all around us: poverty, disease, the various impacts of Covid-19, homelessness, illness, pain and suffering affect so many. In a deeply unequal, unfair world, *Show us how to love, guide us by your Spirit.*

Living God, show us how to be a church that responds to the issues of our time. So often we can be seen as detached, aloof or out of touch with the fast-paced world around us. As we continue to show God's love in the twenty-first century, *Show us how to love, guide us by your Spirit.*

Living God, help us to turn to you to find our strength. Help us to see in the life, death and resurrection stories of Christ an opportunity to transform the way we live and rebuild our society founded in love. *Show us how to love, guide us by your Spirit.*

Living God, we have no mission but to serve you – we recognise our calling in your invitation to love one another. May we be the answers to prayers around this community and this world in the days and weeks to come. As we seek to be sharers of liberation, *Show us how to love, guide us by your Spirit. Amen.*⁵

⁴ Reflection written by Tim Baker

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Tim Baker

Hymn: 410 STF – Lord, your Church on earth is seeking

- 1 Lord, your Church on earth is seeking
your renewal from above;
teach us all the art of speaking
with the accent of your love.
We would heed your great commission:
sending us to every place --
preach, baptise, fulfil my mission,
serve with love and share my grace.
- 2 Freedom give to those in bondage,
lift the burdens caused by sin.
Give new hope, new strength and courage,
grant release from fears within:
light for darkness; joy for sorrow;
love for hatred; peace for strife.
These and countless blessings follow
as the Spirit gives new life.
- 3 In the streets of every city
where the bruised and lonely dwell,
let us show the Saviour's pity,
let us of his mercy tell.
In all lands and with all races
let us serve, and seek to bring
all the world to render praises,
Christ, to you, Redeemer, King.

Hugh Sherlock (1905-1998)

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Blessing

Go out to meet a God of love. Go out and find love at work throughout God's creation. Go out and seek to build a better, safer, more sustainable world,
In Jesus' name. **Amen.**⁶

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker