



Heacham Parish Church



Sunday 12th September 2021 – Trinity 15

Opening music – *Adrian plays 'I do like to be beside the seaside' to accompany Richard C's video introduction of Hunstanton*

A warm welcome in the name of The Lord it's Sunday the 12th of September 2021.

In church today we welcome Dan who is celebrating Holy Communion. Also, he will be opening the word in church and online. We will be using some of the liturgy from the Communion service to unite us in church, online, and those reading this from printed sheets as one body, the Church of Jesus Christ. We hold silence and welcome the Lord in our hearts as we prepare to worship.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you
and also with you.

**through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Song: As the deer pants for the water

As the deer pants for the water,
so my soul longs after You.
You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship You.

*You alone are my strength, my shield,
to You alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship You.*

I want You more than gold or silver,
only You can satisfy.
You alone are the real joy-giver
and the apple of my eye.

You alone are

You're my friend
and You're my brother,
even though You are a king.
I love you more than any other,
so much more than anything.

You alone are

Prayer of preparation

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Prayers of penitence

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

'Hear, O Israel,

the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God

with all your heart,

with all your soul, with all your mind,

and with all your strength.'

The second is this:

'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

God so loved the world

that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ

to save us from our sins,

to be our advocate in heaven,

and to bring us to eternal life.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith,

firmly resolved to keep God's commandments

and to live in love and peace with all.

Confession

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned against you

and against our neighbour in thought and word and deed, through negligence, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault.

We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins.

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past

and grant that we may serve you

in newness of life

to the glory of your name. Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon us,
pardon and deliver us from all our sins,
confirm and strengthen us in all goodness,
and keep us in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Bible reading – Ephesians 5:5-21 read by Amanda Hughes

A reflection – by Dan

The Sun finally came out this week! After weeks of grey cloudy weather, the sun finally broke through with its warmth and light, transforming the way everything looks. I'm not great in the heat but I love how the sun makes things look. Colours are brighter, shapes are sharper, and everything just seems to look better when the sun comes out, and when its light shines on the world.

The bible writers often use light as a metaphor for the revelation of God's love in the world. So, in this reflection today I'll be using the words light and love interchangeably because, in this context, they are one and the same thing.

In Jesus, God has shown us how he loves us completely and unceasingly. And when we put our trust in Jesus we receive the light of that love in our lives, and we are transformed by it. In this passage from Ephesians Paul reminds us that we are "children of light" because we have received the light of his love and are called to let it shine out into the world through the love we share with others.

One analogy that I particularly like for Christian life is that of a mirror, angled at 45 degrees, so that it receives light from above and reflects it horizontally into the world. In this analogy we are

that mirror. We receive the light of God from above and, if we are set at the right angle, we reflect that light into the world. At the same time we reflect the world back up to God.

If we were to only ever face upwards, with our mirror positioned horizontally, we would simply reflect the light of God back up to him. And if our mirror is positioned vertically we only ever face the world around us and reflect that world back to itself. But the calling on us is to face both God and the world and serve to reflect one to another.

If we really drag out this analogy of the mirror, and of reflecting God's light we can maybe make better sense of what Paul is saying throughout this chapter of Ephesians, where he's talking about what Christians need to stop doing if they are to properly reflect the light of Christ into the world. If we think of the long list of things that Paul says we shouldn't be doing as being like dirt on our mirror, I think it can help us to understand why they matter so much.

If a mirror gets dirty it doesn't reflect images well at all. The image gets blurred and is unclear. And if the mirror is really grubby it won't reflect any light at all. We could understand what Paul is saying here as, in short, "keep your mirror clean!" If we are to reflect the light of God's love into the world well, then we need to stop doing the things that block that reflection.

Worse than simply blocking that light is the potential for Christians to distort it, and for that distorted light to do harm. Some of you may remember a news story from a few years ago about a new skyscraper in the City of London, nicknamed "the Walkie Talkie". This building has a beautiful curve to its reflective southern facade. The problem is that on sunny days this curved facade makes a concave mirror that intensifies the sunlight as it reflects it onto the street below. This is like what happens when you use a magnifying glass to focus the sunlight into a concentrated spot of heat to start a fire. And when this heat was concentrated on the street below the Walkie Talkie building, it

generated so much heat that it melted the plastic wing-mirrors of parked cars! The distorted light became dangerous and did harm.

It's possible for the church to do harm when we distort God's light. Tragically history has many incidences of this being the case. And I believe this happens when we forget that God's light is God's relentless love.

We can be so focussed on following rules and instructions that we can lose track of the fact that the Good News of Jesus is all about love. It's all about God's vast, deep, and wonderful love for all of us. That love is the gift we receive in Jesus. And that love is what we are called to reflect in our lives!

But we lose our way. Constantly! So how can we faithfully keep our lives set at the right 45 degree angle, and keep the mirror clean and undistorted?

Well, first of all, we can't do it on our own. We can begin by remembering that the light we have is not our light but God's. It doesn't come from within us. It comes from God. And so, if we want to love more then we need to open ourselves up to receiving God's love for us in the first place. We need to keep turning back towards God to receive his loving light.

This means truly accepting that we, with all our messy brokenness, and with all the things we continue to get wrong, are utterly, deeply, and completely loved by God. And we can remember that God's greatest wish for each of us is to save us from our suffering. God longs to heal us and to make us whole. That's what salvation means, to be healed, restored, and made whole by God. We cannot make ourselves whole. But when we open ourselves up to God's love and are humble enough before him to allow him to change us, trusting him completely and with faith, God can transform us over time into the loving likeness of Christ.

Only by letting the light of God's love into ourselves can we have any hope of being made whole and of reflecting true love into the world.

Now, back to the dirty marks on the mirror that stop us receiving and reflecting the light of God's love. These are the distractions of the world. These are the things that look attractive on the surface but that are ultimately empty, because they don't contain the love of God. One response that's quite common in the church is to put all our efforts into keeping the mirror clean. Unfortunately, if all our efforts go into this it can easily become a form of self-obsession. As we scrub the glass clean, all we see is our own reflection.

A better way ahead, I believe, is to orientate ourselves more towards God, seeking to bathe in the light of his love. This is what Paul is talking about in verses 18 and 19, where he says to "be filled with the Spirit", which is to let the Spirit fill us. To love and encourage one another with the word of God. And to "make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This is the essence of Christian prayer! Too often we're given to understand prayer as asking God to do things. And asking God is certainly one aspect of prayer. We call it supplication, or intercession.

But the foundation and bulk of our prayer ought not to be us asking. The foundation and bulk of our prayer ought to be about us receiving God's love. It's about listening. It should be about us remembering who we are in Christ,
remembering that we are deeply loved,
that we are fully forgiven,
that we are members of his glorious household,
that we are children of the loving Father God,
the giver of all life, light and love,
that we are children of light.

"Giving thanks to God the Father for everything" reminds us of all that he has given us.

And in remembering this our hearts make that music of love that Paul writes about. Our hearts are transformed, healed, and restored into hearts of love, in the likeness of the heart of Christ, who is love personified.

This is the foundation of prayer. And this kind of prayer is the right foundation for Christian life. And it's not a one-hit prayer that we do once and everything's sorted. Nor is it an occasional prayer, or one we only take part in on a Sunday. It is the kind of prayer that forms the foundation of each day. Morning, evening, night-time, and whenever we need reminding of who we are throughout the day. It is the prayer "without ceasing". It's a prayer that can be woven into our work, rest, and play. It is the kind of prayer that becomes a habit, and develops into an attitude that, over a lifetime, transforms who we are, that makes us whole, that allows us to live in the salvation that is the love of God in Jesus Christ.

And a funny thing happens when our heart and minds are increasingly aware of God's love for us and in us. Because our attention and energy has been spent on receiving and reflecting God's love, we haven't given as much energy and attention to those distractions that make the mirror dirty. Our attention has been on love, not on all those things that are not love. And when we do notice a mark on the glass that obscures the light, it's more obvious, and we want to get rid of it because it's spoiling our perception of the light. And we can ask God to help us wipe it away, doing so not by our own strength but by the power of God's love, flowing through our lives, transforming us as radically and beautifully as the sunshine transforms a grey day into a glorious one.

Amen.

The Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God, begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again in accordance with the
Scriptures; he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the
dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who
proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and
glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.**

Amen

Prayers of Intercession – led by Sue Spencer

Almighty God, we come in prayer to you now as our loving Father who knows our every need, as Christ our Saviour who lives to intercede for us, and as the Holy Spirit who comes to the aid of our weakness. We come as people who want to see your Name

glorified and your kingdom extended throughout the earth, and so as we now bring both our local and global needs before you, we ask that we may do so with sensitivity, understanding and imagination so that through our prayers you will minister your grace, power and comfort to all those in need.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Almighty God, ruler of the ends of the earth, we pray for Elizabeth, our Queen and thank you for the strong faith that she has with you and for the example she has shown us. We also pray for those to whom you have entrusted power and responsibility, we pray especially for those who are in government and for all members of Parliament. We ask Lord that you will grant them wisdom, patience, dedication, insight, open mindedness, and humility. We ask Lord that you will guide them with the decisions that they have to make.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Loving God, we thank you for all that we have, our homes, our food, our opportunity for education, our access to healthcare and so much more, we are Lord, the have's. We pray now for those who are the have nots, for those around the world and here at home who have no homes, living as refugees or living rough on the streets. We pray for those who live in inadequate housing, the shacks and huts in shanty towns, refugee camps, or in Bed and Breakfast accommodation because there is nowhere else for them to go. We pray for those who have no food, their crops having failed, for those who have no fresh water, daily facing the threat of disease and the nightmare of drought, for those who have no resources because their economies are burdened by debt. Lord, in the context of this world we are the "haves", those who have been fortunate and who enjoy plenty. Stir our hearts to respond to the "have nots. Help us to say no to ourselves so that we may say yes to them, to sacrifice a little so that they may have much.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord we pray for the health and well-being of our nation, for all who are fearful and anxious, may they be at peace and free from worry. We also pray for those that are known to us who are ill, thinking especially of Simon and for those who are grieving at this time. Let us take a few moments of quiet to bring them to you. We thank you Lord that in times of illness or mourning we know that you are with us and give us the strength that we need to carry on, we pray Lord, for those who don't know you at these times and ask Lord, that you will reach out to them and that they may come to know you.

**Merciful father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen**

The Lord's prayer

Song: **All I once held dear**

All I once held dear,
built my life upon,
all this world reveres,
and wars to own,
all I once thought gain
I have counted loss;
spent and worthless now,
compared to this:

*Knowing You, Jesus,
knowing You,
there is no greater thing.
You're my all,
You're the best,
You're my joy, my righteousness.
and I love You, Lord.*

Now my heart's desire
is to know You more,
to be found in You
and known as Yours,
to possess by faith
what I could not earn,
all-surpassing gift
of righteousness

*Knowing You, Jesus,
knowing You,
there is no greater thing.
You're my all,
You're the best,
You're my joy, my righteousness.
and I love You, Lord.*

Oh, to know the power
of Your risen life,
and to know You in
Your sufferings,
to become like You
in Your death, my Lord,
so with You to live
and never die.

*Knowing You, Jesus,
knowing You,
there is no greater thing.
You're my all,
You're the best,
You're my joy, my righteousness.
and I love You, Lord.*

Blessing

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among us and remain with us and those we love now and always.

Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

Closing music – *Adrian plays 'Go tell it on the mountain' – a jazz version by John A Benke*

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