

# Morning Service 13<sup>th</sup> September 2020 at Cudham

*Please say the words in **bold***

## The Greeting and opening prayer

As we gather in this place, let us open our minds to God.

Blessed be God **who sets us free.**

As we gather in this place, let us open our hearts to God.

Blessed be God **who sets us free.**

As we gather in this place, let us open ourselves to new possibilities.

Blessed be God **who sets us free.**

*Prayer as children leave for Sunday Club-please wait until you are asked!*

## **Hymn– please remain seated and join in quietly!**

Love divine, all loves excelling (see separate sheet)

## Interview with Dan Finch, Head of School at Cudham

### Prayer of Confession

Lord Jesus, thank you for the gifts you give us,

The gift of each other, the gift of prayer,

The gift of your holy Word and the Holy Spirit.

I am sorry for the way I have neglected these gifts.

Help me to say thank you for them and to use them

To build up your church and to grow your Kingdom.

**Amen.**

May the God of love

bring us back to himself,

forgive us our sins,

and assure us of his eternal love

in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

## **The Collect – 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity**

Merciful God,  
your Son came to save us  
and bore our sins on the cross:  
may we trust in your mercy  
and know your love,  
rejoicing in the righteousness  
that is ours through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **Bible Reading Philippians 1:1-20**

### **Gospel reading – Matthew 18:21-25**

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

### **Glory to you, O Lord**

This is the Gospel of the Lord **Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **Talk**

Today we begin a short sermon series from Paul's letter to the church in Philippi. A short series and short sermons. Let's see how we get on.

Letter writing, it's been said, is a dying art. We live in a technological age where everything we do is up there on the cloud – our conversations are now contained in a few characters at best, and while facebook means that things are shared, often because of their algorithms, it becomes an echo chamber of like minded people hearing only what they want to hear.

Paul's letters are very different. A letter takes time to craft, and it's clear from these short verses that Paul knows the church well, you can read its beginnings under his ministry in Acts 15 and 16 (15:36-16:40). Paul knew all the churches under his loving care well, and that's why each letter of his has a distinct character. It shows that Paul did that dual listening so important to us as Christians – to listen to each other – to hear how the Spirit is at work in each other, and so to listen to the Spirit's voice as we seek the best for each other in Christ. Paul's is never more upbeat, never more encouraging, never more joyful and triumphant than when he writes to them. This is all the more surprising when we realise Paul is writing

from prison, probably from his house arrest towards the end of his ministry in Rome. And neither had things gone particularly well during his time some years before in establishing the Christian community in Philippi. There Paul and Silas were thrown into prison for causing a riot in the city!

Paul mentions only a few individuals in this letter – he mentions Timothy, Clement and Epaphroditus, three people the Christians in Philippi would know well, as they'd worked alongside Paul there – Epaphroditus had brought news back from Philippi, hence the letter being written. And towards the end, two Christian women in Philippi are named – Euodia and Syntyche – they'd clearly fallen out, and Paul pleads for their reconciliation.

In the verses we're looking at today – chapter 1:1-20 Paul introduces the big themes that this short but joyful letter will include. Let's have a look at them now.

- 1) 1:1-2. Who we are. From Saint Paul and St Timothy, to the servants of Christ Jesus in Philippi – Grace. Well not, exactly the opposite. We're used to important holy people being called saints, and the rest of us - - sinners? Paul describes himself and Timothy as servants of Christ, and describes members of the church as the way God sees us – we are all saints- God's holy people – and as Paul challenges later, that challenge is to become what we already are, what Christ has already made us – people full of the grace of God through the Holy Spirit
- 2) 1:3-11. Prayer is key. In these 8 verses prayer is mentioned time and again – it's a key to our Christian lives. Prayer for Paul is thanksgiving, in any, and often, despite the outward, circumstance. Are you a half-full or a half-empty sort of person? Someone once said 'people who worry about whether the glass is half full or half empty have missed the point. The glass is refillable'. Now it's not that Paul was an eternal optimist. Far from it. He is an eternal realist. He knows who we are in Christ, and that Jesus died for us, because of our wrongs. His confidence (5) is not in others or

himself, but in Christ – he is the one who will complete what he began in you. That’s something worth hanging on to if we are feeling the present situation getting us down. Hear Paul’s prayer in verse 9 directed at you – that your love for Christ will grow and bear fruit, as that brings glory to God.

- 3)** 12-20 God is at work. Again, we see that Paul’s realism brings a conclusion. He allows the Holy Spirit to help him see beyond the human. There is no competition. One of the features of lockdown and the return to church is that many of us are now broadcasting services online. This could be competitive:- my slick presentation is better than yours, we get more hits than you. In verse 18, looking at the 1<sup>st</sup> century equivalent of those Paul says ‘what does it matter’? The important thing is that Christ is preached, and because of this I rejoice. It’s so easy to criticise, and the features of the unease many are feeling around us brings fears and criticisms easily to the surface. Paul asks his hearers, and so us, to look beyond the surface, to see Christ at work wherever and in whatever way – I will, Paul says, continue to rejoice. He continues, ‘for I know that through your prayers and God’s provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ things will turn out for the best’. How do we cultivate this attitude, so essential for our mental wellbeing, and for the good of the church community? The key is to hear again those two key essentials – praying for each other, and allowing ourselves to be filled with the Spirit of God, as Paul writes to Christians in Galatia the Spirit whose fruit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control.

So, a brief introduction to Paul’s letter to the Philippians. Have a read through it at home, and if you’d like to study it more, let me know, there’s some great books to help you – see, for instance

<https://www.thegoodbook.co.uk/philippians-for-you>

Let’s remember

- who we are in Christ – saints, God’s holy people, called to live out that calling

- that prayer is the key – praising God in Jesus for what he has done, praying with joyfulness for each other to be filled with the love of Christ
- remembering that God is at work whatever the circumstances we find ourselves in – we might need to reorientate ourselves toward the Spirit to see things as God sees them, and to see ourselves as God sees us.

Let's pray.

## **Hymn In Christ alone (see separate sheet)**

### **The Creed**

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,  
from whom every family  
in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,  
who lives in our hearts through faith,  
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,  
who strengthens us  
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**Prayers of intercession – The response is hear our prayer**  
Merciful Father,  
**accept these prayers for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

### **The Lord's prayer**

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.**

**Amen.**

## **The Peace**

Christ is our peace. He has reconciled us to God in one body on the cross. We meet in his name, and share his peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you:

**And also with you.**

*Please turn around and share the peace in a non-contact way*

## **We remember Jesus words at the Last Supper**

Father on the night before he died,

Jesus shared a meal with his friends.

He took the bread, and thanked you.

He broke it, and gave it to them, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this to remember me.

After the meal, Jesus took the cup of wine.

He thanked you, and gave it to them, saying:

Drink this, all of you.

This is my blood,

the new promise of God's unfailing love.

Do this to remember me.

Father, as we bring this bread and wine,  
and remember his death and resurrection,

send your Holy Spirit,  
that we who share these gifts  
may be fed by Christ's body and his blood.

Pour your Spirit on us  
that we may love one another,  
work for the healing of the earth,  
and share the good news of Jesus,  
as we wait for his coming in glory.

For honour and praise belong to you, Father,  
with Jesus your Son, and the Holy Spirit:  
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Body of Christ keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

*If you feel able, you are invited when directed to come forward with your arms out to receive Holy Communion in the form of the bread only or to receive a blessing. Please make your way to the front, and after you have received, return to your seat by turning left and going round the side.*

## **Closing prayer**

**Lord God, the source of truth and love,  
keep us faithful to the apostles' teaching and fellowship,  
united in prayer and the breaking of bread,  
and one in joy and simplicity of heart,  
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## **Blessing**

Christ crucified draw you to himself, to find in him a sure ground for faith,  
a firm support for hope, and the assurance of sins forgiven;  
And may the blessing of God rest upon us;  
The blessing of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Go in the peace of Christ

## **Thanks be to God**

*Please remain in your seats until directed to leave by the stewards. Please leave promptly, using the hand sanitiser on your way out. Feel free to chat at a social distance in the churchyard or in Cudham Rec.*