

To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service set out below.



Opening Prayer: Father God you reveal yourself supremely in Jesus, showing us such love and demonstrating the way to live. Forgive us for the times we have lived in the wrong way. Thank you for the forgiveness offered though Jesus, by his death. Help us to receive your forgiveness and living with eyes fixed upon you, walk forwards in the power of your Spirit and to the praise of your glory. **Amen**

Song:

In the darkness we were waiting
Without hope, without light
'Til from Heaven You came running
There was mercy in Your eyes
To fulfil the law and prophets
To a virgin came the word
From a throne of endless glory
To a cradle in the dirt

*Praise the Father, praise the Son
Praise the Spirit, three in one
God of glory, Majesty
Praise forever to the King of Kings*

To reveal the kingdom coming
And to reconcile the lost
To redeem the whole creation
You did not despise the cross
For even in your suffering
You saw to the other side
Knowing this was our salvation
Jesus for our sake you died

Praise the Father, praise the Son...

And the morning that You rose
All of Heaven held its breath
'Til that stone was moved for good
For the Lamb had conquered death
And the dead rose from their tombs
And the angels stood in awe
For the souls of all who'd come
To the Father are restored

And the church of Christ was born
Then the Spirit lit the flame
Now this gospel truth of old
Shall not kneel, shall not faint
By His blood and in His name
In His freedom I am free
For the love of Jesus Christ
Who has resurrected me

Praise the Father, praise the Son...

Read: Colossians 3:18-4:1

Family Life with Jesus Christ. A summary of the talk given by Howard Wright.

This weekend is Mothering Sunday. Mothers, fathers and pretty much anyone holding a baby, smiles at them, and we long for them to copy us, and smile back. As children we copy our mothers and fathers. We buy children toy kitchens, workshops, hoovers and mowers – but they copy not just our actions but attitudes and habits.

We take on the family likeness – I'm in danger of turning increasingly into my dad; I catch a glimpse of his looks when I walk past a mirror, but also into both him and my mum, as I think about my attitudes and words. I am happy to take on my biological family likeness at its best, but I pray I take on even more so the likeness of my Heavenly Father, and that's where we've got to in this letter.

Read again from last week 3:12-14. In our passage, today, the 'rubber hits the road'. What does this look like in our families?

The Colossian Christians risk two extremes: there are clever philosophies masquerading as alternatives to Christ which encouraged a 'hippie-style' anything goes freedom, and the strict Jewish rituals and rules. So, Paul and Timothy

offer a code that reflects the call to love. (Just by the way, there are parallel messages in Ephesians and 1 Peter)

As mentioned a couple of weeks ago, these are not the 'thou shalt' but 'please do'. We don't see a road sign saying, 'Give Way' and say, 'how dare you tell me what to do', we slow down, and check before moving off. Freedom of expression is a sacred idol in our culture, but it can be poorly applied, as one person's freedoms, just as ignoring roads signs can be catastrophic to ourselves and others.

Here we are offered a code to live by, and it's just an echo of Jesus' own words, Love God, as in the earlier chapters, and now, love one another.

In the context of our culture: We are, I hope, sensitive to sexism and racism and immediately these verses raise a flag – or in some cases, heckles, but there are always at least three contexts with scripture.

In the context of the culture of the day: The Jews and Greeks, for the most part women, children, and slaves were viewed as possessions of the men. Men had the legal and financial advantage. There was a huge risk of abuse of power exerted over another. And there was a risk of embittered subservience. Resulting in a disrespect, spitefulness, and laziness

– though you'd need to be careful not to be caught.

Paul and Timothy, as did the teachers and moralizers of the day, advise woman, children, and slaves, but in dramatic contrast to others of their day they also challenge, men, parents, and slave owners! You can imagine this passage as it's read would have lulled the hearers into a false sense of security as they heard, wives submit to your husbands, but then shaken them awake as husbands were then called out for special treatment, to love their wives and not treat them harshly.

In the context of this letter and the Bible, as we mentioned earlier, this letter points to behaving like Jesus and putting on love. Women, children, slaves, men, and all tribes and all races, are emphatically included in the Gospel as equals.

Jesus values each equally. He elevated the downtrodden, touched the untouchables, spoke to the unspeakable, reached out in love and died for the unlovable! And notice here in this letter (see 3:11) and elsewhere, such as Galatians 3:28.

The home is to be a place where all, mothers, fathers, children, and staff, are valued equally.

Jesus is equal to the Father, and yet submits to him! Not in a subservient way but in love, as in fact we all, male

and female, are called to do to each other. (See Ephesians 5:21.)

The relationship and role of husband, wife, is reciprocal, equal value, though not identical. This is a dramatic move from that culture, offering great freedom, as it does today. And in our culture, it calls for reflection for us in all our relationships – how much do we exert our freedom and power, and how much in love do we submit to others – how are we to be like Jesus?

As we've mentioned before, it's better to love than to be right, and, even more so, better to love than to win!

There is an exclusivity for, and to, each other in the submit and love. It does not allow a 'do what I like' attitude or behaviour, within the push for a so called 'freedom'. It keeps both husband and wife focussed upon each other, not seeking intimacy elsewhere. We are to love one another.

And this is the same for us as mothers or fathers, and sons and daughters. We respect and love each other. As mothers and fathers, we model Christ to our children, and grandchildren – our faith is to be openly seen in our behaviour and attitudes. Read again 3:12-14.

And this all translates into the workplace. We are to respect each other. We are free from being people pleasers, and free to be God chasers, Jesus like and love!

Prayers: *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* (Philippians 4:4-6)



- Pray for this day, and the coming week.
- Pray for justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, for neighbours, for family and friends.
- Pray for the Church.

Collect: Mothering Sunday. God of compassion, whose Son Jesus Christ, the child of Mary, shared the life of a home in Nazareth, and on the cross drew the whole human family to himself: strengthen us in our daily living that in joy and in sorrow we may know the power of your presence to bind together and to heal; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **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.**



Blessing to be declared over yourselves, COGS, the communities around us and our whole nation. The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV)

The Notices: The building is still closed for services, but we are currently hoping we might return to (ticketed and socially distanced) services for Easter Sunday.

If you know of others who would like to receive this, or you would rather not receive it; or if you find yourself isolated and not able to get neighbours, friends, or family to help, then ring Howard, 01420 563344.

0800 804 8044
DailyHOPE
A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers