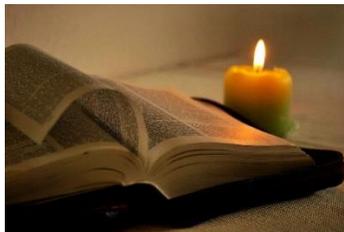


Sunday 24th January 2021

The paper-version Service



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: Almighty God, good Father to us all, help us glimpse today afresh your glory, majesty and might. Thank you that you come to us in Jesus, showing us your glory in both awesome power and gentle love. We seek and receive your forgiveness and pray that you would strengthen us with knowledge of grace that we might proclaim your wonder, in deeds and words to our needy world. **Amen**

Song:

Your grace is enough, more than I need.

At your word I will believe
I wait for you, draw near again.
Let your Spirit make me new.

And I will fall at your feet.
I will fall at your feet.
And I will worship you here.

Your presence in me, Jesus light the way.

By the power of your word.
I am restored, I am redeemed.
By your spirit I am free.

And I will fall at your feet.
I will fall at your feet.
And I will worship you here.

And I will fall at your feet.

I will fall at your feet.

And I will worship you here.

Freely you gave it all for us.
Surrendered your life upon that cross.

Great is the love poured out for all.
This is our God.

Lifted on high from death to life.

Forever our God is glorified.
Servant and king rescued the world.
This is our God.

And I will fall at your feet.

I will fall at your feet.

And I will worship you here.

Read: Colossians 1:15-20

First is Christ. *A summary of the talk given by Peter Cox.*

We all forget things and forgetfulness can be dangerous. Like a parent saying to a child to remember to hold their hand. If we don't remember we are in danger of becoming lost.

In the book the *Silver Chair*, two children, Jill and Eustace, are called to rescue the lost Prince Rilian who has been held captive by the Emerald Queen. Before they set out, the children meet with Aslan in Narnia, who gives Jill four signs to remember with this warning:

'Remember, remember, remember the signs. Say them to yourself when you wake in the morning and when you lay down at night and when you wake in the middle of the night. And whatever strange things may happen to you, let nothing turn your mind from following the signs. And secondly, I give you a warning. Here on the mountain, I have spoken clearly to you... on the mountain the air is clear and your minds are clear, but as you drop down into Narnia, the air will thicken. Take great care that it does not confuse your mind.'

Of course, the children don't remember the signs. They mean well and intend to, but they get muddled and led astray as a result.

In this passage today, Paul is urging the Colossians, and us, to

remember, remember, remember the truth of Christ, lest we forget and are led astray.

As we heard in previous weeks, we don't know the exact nature of the challenges and threats faced by the young church at Colossae. Scholars believe it was threatened not so much by false teaching from outside the boundaries of the church but threats arose from within this early Christian community.

We might expect Paul to launch with an appeal to the Colossian church about this threat, as we see him do with other churches such as the Corinthians. Instead, we see one of the greatest descriptions of Christ in the Bible. Like the children in the *Silver Chair*, Paul well knows that the Colossians are not wilfully unfaithful, but simply young in their faith and naïve in their immaturity. He therefore determines that the best protection against this innocent error is a detailed reminder of the supremacy of Christ.

Paul starts by writing that Christ is preeminent over the universe because He is the image of the invisible God.

By this Paul means that Jesus makes the unseen God visible. In the original translation, Paul used the word 'eikon' where we get the word 'icon'. This word was used to describe the image of Caesar on a

coin. In Paul's time the average person couldn't see Caesar, but by looking at a coin, they could see what he looked like. Jesus reflects God and further, there is no other way to know God than through the person of Jesus Christ. Despite what society and culture may tell us, there is only one way to know God and that is through Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote 'He is the firstborn of all creation'. To be the "firstborn" in the Old Testament refers to being first in rank, the heir and ruler. The firstborn was preeminent over his brothers and sisters. As a result, Paul is reminding us that Jesus is supreme over all creation, because He created it.

Not only did Jesus create all that exists, He also sustains it (Col. 1:17): "In Him all things hold together." This is similar to Hebrews 1:3, which asserts that Jesus 'upholds all things by the word of His power'.

Paul goes on to state that Christ is the head of the church and has supreme authority over it. The analogy of the head and body is very apt. A Christian minister, Stephen Cole, put it this way: *'Just as the head and the body are inextricably joined, so we are united with Christ... as the body is dead if separated from the head, so the body of Christ must draw its life from Christ as it depends on Him.'*

Paul goes on to say that God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Christ, and through Christ to reconcile to himself all things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

I, like many, was raised with the belief that if a person works hard enough, applies themselves fully to a task and is prepared to sacrifice, that they can achieve just about anything they want. But when it comes to our salvation, this is simply not true. We all fall short of the glory of God. If we each look at the CV of our lives, none of us are remotely qualified to save ourselves from sin.

But Christ is – and as Paul explains at the top of Christ's CV under qualifications it reads 'God has chosen to dwell in Christ' and underneath that 'Creator and sustainer of the heaven and earth'. And where it says experience it says: 'Died on the cross and rose again so that people might be reconciled back to God'. And at the bottom, where it says hobbies and interests, it reads 'carpentry' and 'wine making'.

Paul wants every Christian and every person to know that Jesus Christ is preeminent. He is preeminent over His natural creation, the universe. He is preeminent over His spiritual creation, the church. He wants us to remember, remember, remember

Christ. Remember his supremacy, majesty, and sacrifice, so that here in Four Marks as in Narnia and

Colossae, where the air is thick, we will not become lost.

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 the nations, their leaders, and peoples; pray for justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, for neighbours, for family and friends
- Pray for the Church



Third Sunday of Epiphany: Almighty God, whose Son revealed in signs and miracles the wonder of your saving presence: renew your people with your heavenly grace, and in all our weakness sustain us by your mighty power; 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: If you know of others who'd like to receive this, or you'd 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.

