

# Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> February 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, you know our hearts, yet still love us. Forgive us for our lack of love, forgive us for the times we have taken the wrong direction. Thank you that forgiveness is possible though Jesus, by his death upon the cross. Help us receive your forgiveness and walk forwards in obedience to your directions, and in the power of your Spirit live lives that declare your glory. **Amen**

### **Song:**

O perfect love, O perfect sacrifice,  
Fountain of life poured out for me.  
What heights and depths of heaven's  
mercy,  
The faithfulness that I believe.  
And to whom shall I run? And in whom  
shall I hide?  
Only You hold the truth I desire.  
O perfect love, my prayer shall ever be  
To be found in Jesus.

O perfect love, O perfect mystery,  
You were condemned, but I go free.  
What truth to know that I can rest  
upon:  
Your perfect love has covered me.  
And what can this heart know? And

what can this heart tell?  
But of grace that has rescued me.  
O perfect love, my prayer shall ever be  
To be found in Jesus.

O perfect love, forever I shall sing,  
Of heaven's gates flung wide for me.  
Where fear of death and tears of  
hopelessness,  
Are swallowed up in victory.  
And what praise shall be sung, still to  
the Holy One;  
To the Saviour, Redeemer and King.  
O perfect love, my song will ever be:  
'I am found in Jesus.'

**Read:** Colossians 2:16-23



***Found in Christ Jesus.*** A summary of the talk given by Jonathan Rooke.

There is a T-junction at the end of my road. Christians are always standing at T-junctions. It helps if we listen for the right directions to choose the way to go. If we listen to the wrong directions, we can get into all sorts of problems. Do we take this road that leads us nearer and closer to God and his love for us? Or do we take this road that takes us away from his love? We are free to choose to walk down the road that takes us to where we belong - we belong to God.

Paul was concerned that the Colossians were taking the wrong road because they were listening to bad directions. He was trying to tell them You belong to God. Choose to walk down the road that leads to God. Paul told the Colossians Christians - You belong to God because of what he did through Jesus. Focus on that.

The Christians were listening to leaders among them who were telling

them that to fully belong to Christ they needed to follow rules and to do things and behave in certain ways. They were saying in order to know God, in order to gain his favour, in order to properly be one of God's family, in order to properly belong to God... you need to follow these rules. Are you looking for God? Come down this road and on the way, you need to be careful what you eat. Make sure you do not touch this. Make sure you do not handle this. If you do these things, then you will find God and then you will belong to God. It is up to you to make sure you follow this code, otherwise... you will not get to God.

On the face of it, these leaders and influencers seem plausible, if I behave in a certain way God will love me.

I wonder, are we ever following made up rules to win God's favour?

But Paul is saying. No. Wait. Think about it before you take that road. They are not giving you the right directions. Come this way. Let me tell

you why. You now belong to God not because of anything you did or are going to do. You belong to God because God made you and wanted you and he loves you and he was deeply concerned that because of sin and the consequences of sin he could not be close to you and it was stopping him from bringing you fully into his family.

God wanted to live with you and spend time with you so much because he loves you. He decided the way to make sure that everyone can come and live with him was by sending Jesus.

And Jesus acted.

Remember, says Paul, remember, it was Jesus who showed us who God is. It was Jesus who taught us how God wants us to behave. It was Jesus who went to the cross to show us how much God loves us and to break the power and consequences sins can have over our lives. It was Jesus who made forgiveness possible and it was Jesus who made possible a new life and it was the action of Jesus rising to life that released the Holy Spirit to help us and guide us. It was Jesus who made it possible to walk in the direction of a new life with God.

Why, oh why, says Paul, why are you listening to the leaders and influencers over there on the other side of the T junction, who are clinging

on to old, empty understandings? Do not you understand God loves you because he loves you. Not because of any empty rituals that keep you separate. Do not you understand he likes you (and for some of us that is hard to accept). Whoever you are, God loves you.

Jesus came to live with us, not because we behaved in a certain way. He came because God wanted to come for us. He did not come for only those who were following the man-made regulations. He came to open up the road for everyone.

Paul is saying, you Colossian Christians, and that includes us, you belong to Christ now. Hold fast to God. He is the one who helps you to grow in a constantly renewing life. He feeds you. He provides. Walk this way and you will find there are behaviours and things God asks you to do. Do them, not to win his favour so he loves you more. He already loves you. But do them because he loves you, because that is just how you respond when you know how much you are loved.

Let us pray: Dear God, show us that we belong to you. Keep our eyes fixed on you. Keep us walking down the right road. **Amen**

**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: The First Sunday of Lent.** Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness, and was tempted as we are, yet without sin: give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit; and, as you know our weakness, so may we know your power to save; 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 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