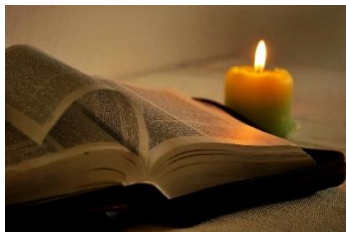


Sunday 31st January 2021

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: Father God thank you that in Jesus you have reconciled us back to yourself. You have made a way home for us through the death of your son. Help us receive this gift and stand confidently in your presence today as we read your Word, pray, and worship you. Keep us rooted in your love and grace, and equip us for every good work as we live as messengers of your Gospel. **Amen**

Song:

Our Father everlasting,
The all creating One
God Almighty
Through Your Holy Spirit
Conceiving Christ the Son
Jesus our Saviour

*I believe in God our Father
I believe in Christ the Son
I believe in the Holy Spirit
Our God is three in one
I believe in the resurrection
That we will rise again
For I believe in the name of Jesus*

Our Judge and our Defender
Suffered and crucified
Forgiveness is in You
Descended into darkness

You rose in glorious life
Forever seated high

I believe in God...

Bridge: *I believe in You
I believe You rose again
I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord*

I believe in God...

I believe in life eternal
I believe in the virgin birth
I believe in the saints' communion
And in Your holy Church
I believe in the resurrection
When Jesus comes again
For I believe, in the name of Jesus

I believe in God...

Read: Colossians 1:21-23

Firm in Christ Jesus. A summary of the talk given by Jane Hughes.

We are continuing our teaching series on Paul's letter to the church in Colossae

As we move to the next few verses Paul:

- Acknowledges a time of separation from God,
- Goes on to describe that, through Christ's sacrifice, all those who believe and stay rooted and firm in their faith enter a time of reconciliation with God,
- And then declares that this is the gospel.

Paul starts with saying to the Colossians, once you were alienated, separated, and far from God. He tells them, they were God's enemies because of their evil behaviour.

This message of separation was not just for those in Colossae but also features in Paul's letters to the Romans (chapter 5) and to the Ephesians (chapter 2).

For some of us right now we are experiencing the pain of separation from our loved ones. We are unable to meet with them or give them a hug.

How much more the pain of our Father to be so separated from all his creation.

But now we are reconciled, brought back together through Christ. Jesus became human for us and gives himself completely in his physical death, making peace for us with God. We have been brought over to God's side and can now stand in his presence having been made holy and whole, without blemish, innocent in his sight. The Message version says: 'You don't walk away from a gift like that!'

Wow! Take a moment to think this through...



Verse 23 begins with a word often used to introduce a conditional clause: 'IF'. The condition is expressed as: '*If You continue in faith...*' Other versions use '*...you must stay deeply rooted and firm in your faith...*' The Message uses the words '*stay grounded and steady in that bond of trust, constantly tuned in to the Message, careful not to be distracted or diverted.*'

In John 15 Jesus himself says *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”*

As a church we have in the first part of our vision statement *‘Growing deeper in God through Jesus Christ by prayer praise, worship bible study and fellowship with one another.’* We acknowledge this need for rootedness in Christ.

Here in verse 23 Paul tells the Colossians to continue in this faith, Paul reminds them and us that to continue to receive this gift we must stay deeply rooted and firm in our faith, continuing to believe this good news, grounded and steady, our faith established and firm, strong and sure. We need to be constantly tuned to the message, not moving away from or giving up on the hope held out in this Gospel, this good news.

For each of us this will look different, there is not one formula, we cannot state that thirty minutes a day reading the Bible, or an hour praying, is the right amount to stay connected.

How we stay rooted in Christ, we, with God’s help, need to discover for ourselves.

This might look a little different now to how it looked pre-pandemic and will probably look different again

post-pandemic. But I ask you to consider how do you connect with God; how do you not only stay rooted in Christ but grow deeper?

Paul ends by proclaiming, ‘This is the Gospel... of which I, Paul have



become a servant.’

This Gospel message is the same for all, a truth for everyone who chooses to believe and follow not just a select few, a message preached to everyone on earth.



Paul says, ‘I Paul am a messenger, a servant of this message.’ And we too are called to preach this message and be this good news to others.

So, I invite you to say: **I (name) am a messenger, a servant of this message, this Gospel.**

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

Fourth Sunday of Epiphany: God our creator, who in the beginning commanded the light to shine out of darkness: we pray that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ may dispel the darkness of ignorance and unbelief, shine into the hearts of all your people, and reveal the knowledge of your glory in the face of 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.

