

Worship at Home

4th October 2020

Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist Circuit

Welcome

Welcome to worship.

We join together as a Circuit to worship God, to hear from him, and be guided by him.

Before we sing our opening hymn, shall we say this Psalm together...

Psalm 145 v 3-7

Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.

One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.

They speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty - and I will meditate on your wonderful works.

They tell of the power of your awesome works and I will proclaim your great deeds.

They celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness.

I sing the almighty power of God

(StF 107)

I sing the mighty pow'r of God,
that made the mountains rise,

That spread the flowing seas abroad,
and built the lofty skies.

I sing the wisdom that ordained the sun
to rule the day;

The moon shines full at His command,
and all the stars obey.

I sing the goodness of the Lord,
who filled the earth with food,
Who formed the creatures through the Word,
and then pronounced them good.
Lord, how Thy wonders are displayed,
where'er I turn my eye,
If I survey the ground I tread,
or gaze upon the sky.

There's not a plant or flow'r below,
but makes Thy glories known,
And clouds arise, and tempests blow,
by order from Thy throne;
While all that borrows life from Thee
is ever in Thy care;
And everywhere that we can be,
Thou, God, art present there.

Issac Watts 1674-1748

Prayer

Great and Glorious God....

Lord and Creator of the vast universe which stretches further than our minds can comprehend and whose secrets we are only beginning to understand;

We sing your praises - out loud and in our hearts.

We join with all nature in declaring your majesty.

Loving and Tender God....

Who reaches down to cup us in your hand at times of distress.

Our Heavenly Father who gifts us with your loving kindness and generous heart.

Our lives are embraced in Your love and care.

Just and Forgiving God....

When we do wrong you forgives us;

Although we fail you time and time again you pick us up and dust us down.

You don't desert us, heavenly Father, for your grace is perfect.

As we confess our sins we trust in your mercy. Open our hearts today, in this our act of worship, that we might feed on your word. Release us fulfilled through the knowledge of your presence.

Amen

The Word

Part 1 Philippians 3 v 4b – 11 (New Revised Standard Version)

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. ⁷Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. ⁸More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. ¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, ¹¹if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Profit and loss

It is difficult to read this passage and not be prompted to ask questions of ourselves. What is it that we hold to be most important in our lives? What or who do we place the most value on?

It's almost inevitable that we look outwards to the material world and what we might consider to be the typical hedonistic lifestyle with its concentration on the coolest gadget, or the latest fashion, and feel content that "We're not like that".

But do we ever ask ourselves the question – "What is most important to me?" And if we don't – perhaps we should.

In the past when I would ask this question of individuals or groups of children, their immediate and unhesitating response would be "family". Whatever they considered to be family, was most important for them.

From what we know, Paul wasn't a family man, so in some ways he could bypass what for many of us would be our natural response. But Paul was clear in his determination that there was only one thing that mattered – and that was Jesus Christ and his relationship with him. In fact, he considers all things that went before to be "dross" or "rubbish" in comparison.

But in order that Christ may come first, Paul has to lose something. He lists his credentials as a Jew – it's impressive! At least it is to another Jew, but to Paul, that was all history and had to be put in its place. In order to gain Christ, he had to lose what went before – "*But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ*"

When I was younger – at an age when our friends were starting families – I once asked a friend how he felt about being a parent. He answered, "It's like this Graham, the things that used to be important just aren't important anymore". He had overnight developed a whole new set of values.

The dramatic shift that my friend experienced, is a parallel to what it's like on becoming a follower of Christ, to put our hope and trust in the Lord Jesus and to put Him first.

At the heart of the Christian experience is to love and to be loved. To love God and be loved by God.

Consequently, Jesus becomes the central and integral part of our whole existence.

So what is most important? - because even when we think we have the right answer we still need to remind ourselves of the question.

As we do that, let's sing, or just read this modern hymn by Graham Kendrick that reflect the words of our reading so well.

All I once held dear StF 489

All I once held dear, built my life upon
All this world reveres, and wars to own
All I once thought gain I have counted loss
Spent and worthless now, compared to this

*Knowing you, Jesus
Knowing you, there is no greater thing
You're my all, you're the best
You're my joy, my righteousness
And I love you, Lord*

Now my heart's desire is to know you more
To be found in you and known as yours
To possess by faith what I could not earn
All-surpassing gift of righteousness

Oh, to know the power of your risen life
And to know You in Your sufferings
To become like you in your death, my Lord
So with you to live and never die

*Graham Kendrick
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Part 2

Philippians 3 v 12-14

(¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.)

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

No gain without pain

When I was at school, my chosen activity during games lessons, was cross country running. Not that I was any good, it was just the least of several potentially painful options.

I can assure you that no “straining” ever took place on my part, and yet this is the image that Paul evokes of his journey in Christ. He wants to “know Christ” and even “share in his sufferings” in order to become more like him, straining to reach the goal.

He paints a picture of determination, commitment and single-mindedness in his journey with Jesus.

His is a passion, a yearning, a longing. The bible describes such a feeling as being from “the gut” or the “bowels”. We British politely say that it is a matter of the “heart”, but the bible is more earthy than that.

The point is this - if we have only a half-hearted response, then we are missing out on the real thing. It’s like waiting in the queue for the big dipper, and then declining to get on because we feel the queue is excitement enough.

Our first love.

So what is most important to us?

In Revelation 2 v 4, Jesus says to the church at Ephesus “*I have this one thing against you, you have forsaken your first love*”. The first love he is talking of is Himself.

Maybe you recognise that in yourself, or in the church. Or maybe you never experienced the love of Jesus for yourself.

Maybe Paul’s example and passion for Christ is something we can re-kindle in our own lives, and this in turn will spill over into the life of the church and our community.

Shall we pray.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we confess that there are times when we have not put you first. Our families, our homes, our friends are all gifts and blessings from you, and we thank you for them, but in you is our hope for eternal life. In you is perfection, for you came to bring us life in all it’s fulness.

Lord if we have forgotten our first love in you, we are sorry and come again to you.

If we have never known you, we come before you, not through any goodness of our own, but because of the great cost paid for us by Jesus on the cross.

You have shown your love, let us show ours.
You have shown your care, let us show ours.
You have shown your devotion, let us show ours.

Help us, whoever we are, to dedicate ourselves to you, our Lord and our Saviour
Amen

The Lord’s Prayer.

Our Father

Song - Turn you eyes upon Jesus

In this version by Sovereign Grace worship, the chorus “turn your eyes” becomes the verse, sung to the familiar tune. The new chorus has new tune. If it isn’t familiar to you Then you could just recite and appreciate the words.

1 Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace

2 Turn your eyes to the hillside
Where justice and mercy embraced
There the Son of God gave His life for us
And our measureless debt was erased

CHORUS

Jesus, to You we lift our eyes
Jesus, our glory and our prize
We adore You, behold You,
our Saviour ever true
Oh Jesus, we turn our eyes to You

3 Turn your eyes to the morning
And see Christ the lion awake
What a glorious dawn, fear of death is gone
For we carry His life in our veins

4 Turn your eyes to the heavens
Our King will return for His own
Every knee will bow, every tongue will shout
All glory to Jesus alone

Original words (V 1) and music by Helen H. Lemmel. Additional words (V 2-4) by George Romanacce, Nic Trout, Kevin Winebarger, and Nathan Stiff. Chorus music and words by George Romanacce, Nic Trout, Kevin Winebarger, and Nathan Stiff. © 2019 Sovereign Grace Worship

A Blessing

May our Heavenly Father, who gives us peace and dwells in us through His Spirit, keep us strong in purpose and unity, now and always. Amen