

Order of Service Sunday 30th January 2022

Good morning and welcome to the online Service this morning. This is the Sunday when we have a joint Service together

Let us pray

Loving God, You have known us since before we were born, you know what is in our minds and our hearts. If we have done anything wrong we are sorry. As a good father you forgive us when often we don't deserve it. We bring before you the thoughts on our hearts today in a moment of silence. Having listened to us individually we now unite in the words your son taught us saying :-

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.

Amen.

1st Hymn 115 'Love is the touch of intangible joy

1st Reading Corinthians 13: 1-13

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

2nd Hymn 145 God made me as I am

2nd Reading Luke 4:21-30

He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."
All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips.
"Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.

Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself!' And you will tell me, 'Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'"

"Truly I tell you," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian."

All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Paul is considered to have written some of the most divisive words in the Bible and yet some of the most beautiful. The reading from Corinthians 13:1-13 is beautiful and can be used at weddings when the mood is upbeat, hopeful, painting the best of what love is; a gentle reminder to the married couple that following their special day is a lifetime of marriage with all the ups and downs that life brings is supported by patience and kindness.

At funeral services the mood is often different, with families looking back on a hopefully long line where kindnesses and care can be acknowledged and given thanks for.

Like the Psalmist before him, Paul touched on aspects and emotions of life. – which we are all aware of boastfulness, arrogance, irritability and resentment, I am sure that all of these feelings we have experienced, but contrast these feelings with the greater and positive emotions of truth and hope and endurance. Again, Paul doesn't paint a picture of perfection that puts us all to shame, but names the whole spectrum of human emotions and behaviour and finds possibility and hope in their midst.

There are aspects of youth growing into adulthood :

these familiar words " when I was a child , I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways."

That sense of growing up, of growing into and taking responsibility for life, is part of a Biblical tradition where we see prophets, kings and apostles grow in age, as well as faith and understanding.

This journey of change and growth continues throughout life and leads us into the next: "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then we shall see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. In the film, 'The Wizard of Oz' when the Tin Man asked for a heart and the Scarecrow a brain and the Lion for courage, they were rewarded not with these gifts but with the realisation that they already possessed these gifts. Or to use a more biblical story, Solomon showed great wisdom in asking for the gift of wisdom. Recognising what we don't know, rather than being a barrier to growth, is a springboard that allows us to develop.

In Luke's Gospel there is amazement at the gracious words that came from Jesus's mouth. The crowd said 'is not this Joseph's son? The small babe in the manger visited by three wise men from the East, has grown up. The small boy that had sat at his father's feet in the Carpenter's shop has grown up, he has acquired the craftsmanship of his father but also as a listener this had helped to sustain life in the village, and now he was a man in His own right and now when He spoke in the Synagogue, all spoke of him and how amazed they were at the gracious words. Jesus had listened to all who came to Joseph the carpenter, were 'ordinary' people he was one of their own, welcomed and celebrated. He had soothed people but needed to challenge them too. If only Jesus had left it there, if he had been content to promise and celebrate. But had he done that, the job would only have been half finished. He needed His listeners to take responsibility and to change, and needless to say, those same people who had spoken well of him then drove him out of the town with the plan to hurl him off the cliff.

We can use this as a story to learn about what makes us feel anxious or angry and how we might respond more openly and more positively. We need to see ourselves – our doubts, our worries, our concerns - reflected in what we read and hear, and while we are given an opportunity to dwell and feel understood, we are also encouraged to do and be more than we want to, or thought we were capable of.

Our readings, written many generations ago, remind us that others have faced uncertainty and the call to change, and have expressed fears and doubts, but in God's company and presence have faced challenges and become fuller people as a result.

Amen.

Hymn 192 All my hope on God is founded

Prayers of Intercession

Loving God, thank you for the readings and the service of today. Encourage us to believe in you and in ourselves so that we may carry out the work you would have us do.

We pray for the planet you made. When there is war bring peace, and guide people through storms, droughts or any challenging situation.

We pray for the people of the world, may they know your grace in their lives .

We pray for all those who are ill, dying or supporting someone through these times. May they find comfort knowing that your loving arms are waiting for them and for those left behind, give them the knowledge that you are there for them too.

We pray for our church in a time of change. There will be people who are hurt, but help us all, to focus on your uniting love. All these prayers we offer in the name of your son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen

Our closing Hymn this morning is Hymn 489 Come down 'O Love Divine'

Blessing

May the grace of Christ, which daily renews us,
And the love of God, which enables us to love all, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
which unites us in one body, make us eager to obey the will of God until we meet again.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen