



## Gloucestershire Methodist Circuit

### At Home Worship 25<sup>th</sup> October 2020

#### **Opening Prayer**

One thing I have asked of the Lord,  
this is what I seek:  
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord  
all the days of my life;  
to behold the beauty of the Lord  
and to seek Him in His temple.

*Call:* Who is it that you seek?

*Response:* We seek the Lord our God.

*Call:* Do you seek Him with all your heart?

*Response:* Amen. Lord, have mercy.

*Call:* Do you seek Him with all your soul?

*Response:* Amen. Lord, have mercy.

*Call:* Do you seek Him with all your mind?

*Response:* Amen. Lord, have mercy.

*Call:* Do you seek Him with all your strength?

*Response:* Amen. Christ, have mercy.

*(Taken from The Northumbria Community – Celtic Daily Prayer)*

Loving God, we thank you that you have commissioned us to participate in your very nature by living out your love here on Earth.

We thank you for the joyfulness of this commission and pray, that we may enter into it with all our heart, all our soul and all our mind.

Yet we are aware that this is a commission full of risk and challenge.

So, we pray, that you would keep us close and fill us with your delight and your love.

**Amen**

*(James Ashdown – taken from URC Prayer Handbook 2020)*

#### **Matthew 22:34-46 (NIV)**

<sup>34</sup> Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. <sup>35</sup> One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: <sup>36</sup> “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

<sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”<sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’<sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

<sup>41</sup> While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, <sup>42</sup> “What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?”

“The son of David,” they replied.

<sup>43</sup> He said to them, “How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him ‘Lord’? For he says,

<sup>44</sup> “The Lord said to my Lord:

“Sit at my right hand  
until I put your enemies  
under your feet.””<sup>45</sup>

<sup>45</sup> If then David calls him ‘Lord,’ how can he be his son?” <sup>46</sup> No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.

### **Singing the Faith 504**

May the mind of Christ, my Saviour,  
live in me from day to day,  
by his love and power controlling  
all I do and say.

May the Word of God dwell richly  
in my heart from hour to hour,  
so that all may see I triumph  
only through his power.

May the peace of God my Father  
rule my life in everything,  
that I may be calm to comfort  
sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me  
as the waters fill the sea;  
him exalting, self abasing:  
this is victory.

May I run the race before me,  
strong and brave to face the foe,  
looking only unto Jesus  
as I onward go.

### **Reflection – Rev Phil Summers**

Is it too early to talk of Christmas decorations? I’m sure the shops will have theirs ready to go up – if they are not up already. It’s not the decorations as such but the hanging of them that concerns me. When the time comes around, I will use various small nails that have been left in since last year, with the addition of drawing pins and a little sticky tape to finish off. Some years I’ve rushed the hanging and more than once, I’ve come home to find lights or garlands hanging limply halfway down the wall or even entirely on the floor. The nails on which they hang are all important. Or, if you cannot face Christmas just yet, think of a coat. I hang mine up, without thinking. Without my coat hooks then there would just be a great mound of coats for all seasons gathered at the foot of our stairs. The hooks on which the coats hang are all important.

A life of faith can be a life filled with questions. From 'How then, shall we live?' to 'Am allowed to wear jeans to church?'. The first deals in the existential (what do we do with our very existence) the second deals with the trivial. Yet, so often it is the trivial that we get flustered about. From flower rotas to bible translations, from how to dress to how to make trifle (yes, I've known churches that have fallen out over trifle). Sometimes the questions that we wrangle over deal with deeply serious issues. In our history the church has furiously debated the rights and wrongs of enslaving Africans, the equality and voting rights of women – and in our present day our understanding of human sexuality.

All these great debates, and the minor ones too should be guided by love. Our love for God and our love for our neighbour. All the law of faith and all the prophetic guidance hang on these two things. So, when we're forming our opinions, when we're making proclamations, even when we're deciding the colour of the church carpets, we hang our decisions on these two great hooks. It does not matter how passionately we feel about an argument. If that argument is not wholly reliant on love for God and love for neighbour then like the collapsed Christmas decoration it falls to the floor and isn't fit for purpose. St. Paul clearly puts it more eloquently than I: 'If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal' [1 Corinthians 13:1; NRSV]. I have heard many an opinionated speech passionately argued but failing in love that it just becomes a jarring noise.

So then, how do we live? With love. Each day, every moment. So when we form an opinion, major or minor, political, social or religious, we must ask ourselves, where is the love? Loving God with heart, soul and mind and loving all those we meet (for everyone is our neighbour) with the love shown to us in Jesus. It is not necessarily easy and for all of us it's a lifelong journey of learning, development and growth. On this love hangs all the law and the prophets, all our rules and regulations, all our thinking about God and all our sharing of the Good News. The life that we are called to live hangs on the nails of love.

## **Prayers**

Loving Lord God, Father Son and Holy Spirit,

Inspire us to live in your love and in that love to love you with heart, mind and soul.

We hold before you the concerns of our hearts and minds.

We pray your love to surround and comfort those who suffer in our world.

*(Bring to mind a news story you have heard)*

We pray your love to surround those we know personally.

*(Bring to mind someone who needs to know God loves them)*

The Lord hears our prayer – Thanks be to God.

God of every time and season, surprise us with your steadfast love when morning dawns.

Inspire us with your loving kindness in the noonday sun.

Satisfy us with your constant goodness when evening falls.

And guard us with your mercy as we gather into sleep.

**Amen**

*(James Ashdown – URC Prayer Handbook 2020)*

**Singing the Faith 351 - In Christ Alone**

In Christ alone my hope is found  
He is my light, my strength, my song  
This cornerstone, this solid ground  
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm  
What heights of love, what depths of peace  
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease  
My comforter, my all in all  
Here, in the love of Christ, I stand

There in the ground, his body lay  
Light of the world, by darkness, slain  
Then bursting forth in glorious day  
Up from the grave, he rose again  
And as he stands in victory  
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me  
For I am his and he is mine  
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life, no fear in death  
This is the power of Christ in me  
From life's first cry to final breath  
Jesus commands my destiny  
No power of hell, no scheme of man  
Could ever pluck me from his hand  
'Til he returns or calls me home  
Here, in the power of Christ, I stand

**Blessing**

Bless you as your heart is God's  
Bless you as your soul is too  
Bless you mindful of God's love.

May you know the love of God  
In neighbour and stranger.  
In the name of Jesus  
By the power of the Spirit  
To the glory of the Father.

**Amen**

**Rev'd Phil Summers**

**CCLI Number: 176885**