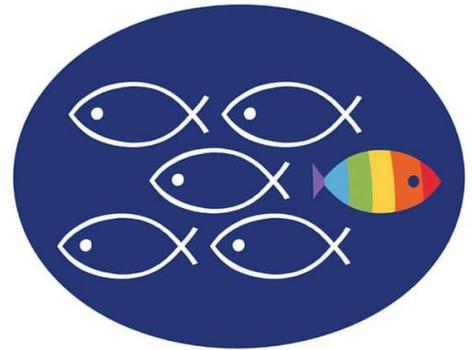


Parish of Central Exeter

Morning Worship and Spiritual Communion
20th Sunday after Trinity 25th October 2020



The Greatest Commandment

Welcome everyone.

Our reflections this morning are by Chris Bryan and those for this evening by Sheila. Many thanks to you both.

Today is also celebrated as Bible Sunday, and our liturgy this morning will reflect this theme as well as the scripture reading.

Preparation

From the very beginning was
Your Word,
which spoke this world into being,
Your Word,
which thunders from the skies,
Your Word,
which flows like mountain streams,
Your Word,
which whispers in the morning breeze,
Your Word,
revealed through kings and prophets,
Your Word,
revealed through Angels' praise,
Your Word,
revealed in humble service,
Your Word,
revealed through a tiny child,
Your Word,
alive from the beginning of all things
and to eternity.

Gathering Hymn

'And can it be': one of Charles Wesley's great hymns. This comes from a BBC Songs of Praise. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQelGbKqiw8>

Confession and Absolution

Holy God, we join in worship from our separate homes,
a people who would like to think that we love you
with all our hearts and souls,
with all our might,

but there are so many other things in our lives
that clamour for our attention
that we often relegate you to Sundays
and Wednesdays,
and times when we want you to rescue us.

Even so we really do want you to be the one
in whom we live and move and have our being.
We really do want to hear your voice
above all of the other voices in our lives.
But we get bogged down in the daily routine.
We forget who we are.
We forget who you are.
We forget what the church is supposed to be.

(A time of silence)

So here we are, standing before you today,
with our human foibles
and our short attention spans,
asking that you would make yourself known to us,
that you would help us to recognize
the presence of the Holy,
that you would continue to challenge us,
inspire us,
and make us into the people you want us to be.

Amen.

(by Katie Cook, in Sacred Seasons. Posted on Simple Living Works)

Assurance of Pardon

Nothing will deter God from sharing this good news with us: we are heard, we are forgiven,
we are offered new lives of service and faith.

Thanks be to God, who offers justice not judgment; who shares grace with us, and holds no grudges against us. We are forgiven. Amen.



A collect for Bible Sunday

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and for ever hold fast
the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.



Worship song

We hear 'Lord thy word abideth' sung by the virtual choir of St Michaels and All Angels, North Stoneham and Bassett, Southampton, during a recent virtual service. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcghwj7zZZg>

Reading Matthew 22:34-46 New International Version - UK

The greatest commandment

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

³⁷ Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'" ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself." ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.'

Whose son is the Messiah?

⁴¹ While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, ⁴² 'What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?'
'The son of David,' they replied.

⁴³ He said to them, 'How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him "Lord"? For he says,

⁴⁴ "'The Lord said to my Lord:
'Sit at my right hand

until I put your enemies
under your feet.”⁴⁵

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



Christ preaching

Print Sadao Watanabe 1992

Japanese Christian Artist

Reflection

How strange it is to be asked to “preach” in the midst of a pandemic! To “preach” by writing a text!—after I spent years as a teacher of seminarians telling them to remember that a sermon was *not* the same thing as a text. That a sermon was essentially a *living* word, so that when they preached it was their task to *talk* to people! Still, here we are in the midst of a pandemic, and we must work where we are placed. So here are a few *written* thoughts on our gospel passage for today.

One still from time to time hears people—and, I regret to say, I have even heard Christian preachers among them—say things like “The God of the Old Testament is a God of Wrath” or “the God of the Jews is a God of Law”, whereas “the God of the New Testament, the God of Jesus, is a God of Love”. Would Jesus—who was himself a Jew and had what we call “the Old Testament” as his only Bible—would he have agreed?

Evidently he would not.

“Teacher,” he is asked in today’s gospel reading, “which commandment in the law is the greatest?”

His questioners weren’t asking him to answer a question that hadn’t been asked and answered before. The prophet Micah had answered it in one way:

He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and love mercy,
and to walk humbly with your God? (6.8).

The great Rabbi Hillel, when asked a generation or so earlier than Jesus to summarise the whole Law while standing on one leg, had famously formulated what we sometimes call “the golden rule”— “What is hateful to yourself do not do to another. That is the whole Law. The rest is commentary. Go and learn it.”

Wonderful summaries both of them!—and we can surely still learn from them. But what of our Lord’s answer to the question?

His reply is what we just heard: “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’”

Let’s be clear at once: there is nothing original or specifically “Christian” about this. Jesus (unlike most politicians) is actually answering the question he’s been asked.

“What is the great commandment in the Law?”—that is, in the Scriptures, in the Torah of Israel?

He replies quite directly by pointing to two of those commandments, straight out of those Scriptures, the Torah of Israel. “You shall love the LORD your God” from Deuteronomy 6.5—words which every faithful Jew recites every day as part of morning and evening prayers—and “you shall love your neighbour as yourself” from Leviticus 19.18.

If we may trust St Luke, even the *combination* of the two commandments was not original to Jesus. The scribes, according to Luke, had already made that combination, for the lawyer who questions our Lord bases his question on it (Luke 10.27).

Dr Samuel Johnson once said, “Most of us most of the time need not to be taught something new, but to be reminded of what we thought we had learned already.” What Micah’s, Rabbi Hillel’s, and Our Lord’s responses all have in common is that they remind the questioners of what the questioners probably thought they already knew. Micah actually points this out, doesn’t he?—“he has *told* you, o mortal, what is good!” he says! And one might hear unspoken, “And still you don’t get it!”

There are, however, two questions I have heard asked about Jesus’ summary of the Law, and they are these.

First, if we are to love God “with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind”, how can there possibly be anything left over to love anything else—even our neighbour?

The answer to that is that loving our neighbour is one way—and indeed, the key way—in which we love God. When Jesus says the “second commandment” is “like” the first, the Greek word (*homoios*) that our Bible translates as “like” means “equally great or important, equal to”. Jesus is saying that this second commandment is “second” only in numerical order, *not in importance!* And the reason for that is very simple: we cannot actually carry out “the first commandment” *unless we are also attempting the second*, for as St John says, “those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen” (1 John 4.20). There is then, despite its somewhat florid diction, an element of truth in Leigh Hunt’s poem “Abu Ben Adhem”, which I had to learn by heart when I was an eleven-year old at school (do children have to learn things by heart any more?):

About Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase!)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold:—
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said,
“What writest thou?”—The vision raised its head,
And with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answered, “The names of those who love the Lord.”
“And is mine one?” said Abou. “Nay, not so,”
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still; and said, “I pray thee, then,
Write me as one that loves his fellow men.”
The angel wrote, and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God had blest,
And lo! Ben Adhem’s name led all the rest.

The second question we might want to ask about Jesus’ twofold commandment is this: “What exactly does our Lord mean when he says I am to love my neighbour *as myself*?” In our English Bibles, and even in St Matthew’s Greek, that could be taken to mean that I must love my neighbour “in the way that I love myself”. And indeed it sometimes is taken like that. I’ve heard sermons preached on the theme. I’m not saying they were bad sermons (although I have heard people object on the grounds that “I have days when I don’t love myself at all”) but I do have to say that the preachers had probably misunderstood of the commandment.

Our Lord is quoting from Leviticus, and Leviticus explains itself. Later in the same chapter it gives an example of loving someone “as yourself” when it says you should treat decently the alien who is your midst, “for you too were aliens in the land of Egypt” (Lev. 19.34). Treat aliens and foreigners fairly, it says, because when it comes down to it they are people *just like you*, and there are times when you have found yourself *exactly where they are*. In other words, “you shall love your neighbour as yourself” means “*as someone who is like you.*” This, I suspect, is a much more profound reason than my presumed self-love for following the Shakespearian precept “love thyself last”. When I emphasize my *difference* from others in ways that make them inferior to me, that is a step toward saying that they are in some sense

less human than I am, and that is a step towards treating them badly and feeling okay about it, and that is a step towards persecutions and pogroms and ethnic cleansing and all the other sickening outrages against God and humanity that mar human history. As Pope Francis recently reminded us, “Division comes from the devil,”¹ and those who would divide us from each other by emphasising our differences in a negative way are doing the devil’s work, whoever they are or however exalted their claims.

What Our Lord tells us then is this: that the call to us as human beings to love God and thereby to love our neighbour is actually what the whole long, complicated and often tortuous Bible story is really about. If you want to be faithful to the God of Israel, if you want to be what the God of the Bible created you to be, try to obey those two commandments and you won’t go too far wrong. And essentially, of course, it’s not different from what Micah said. And Rabbi Hillel.

Some things, thank God, don’t change, and even in the midst of a pandemic it’s good to know that those two signposts point the way for us as plainly and clearly now as they ever did.

God bless you all.



Creed

We believe in God,
who has created, is creating, and will always create,
who is with us in Jesus to reconcile, and to make all things new.
We proclaim Jesus the Christ,
born a human, crucified, dead and risen, who calls us friends,
and invites us to love and serve others.
We trust the Holy Spirit
who empowers us to seek justice and to resist evil;
our judge and our hope, in life, in death and in all eternity.
God is with us and in us, and we are never alone.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

¹ National Convocation of “Renewal in the Spirit,” Olympic Stadium in Rome, June 2, 2014.

Intercessions

Our prayer today is for all who are victims of injustice,
those who are subjected to prejudice,
denied opportunities, excluded, pushed to margins.

May we love our neighbour as ourselves

Our prayer today is for all those who feel betrayed,
who don't know loyalty, who fear to trust, or to love,
and who don't realise that they're already loved by you.

May we love our neighbour as ourselves

Our prayer today is for the landless and homeless,
the refugee and evicted,
those who find themselves in foreign places and strange places.

May we love our neighbour as ourselves

Our prayer today is for the overworked and the underpaid,
for those in dangerous work and those in compassionate work,
for those who long to work but are denied the opportunity

May we love our neighbour as ourselves

Our prayer today is for the Church, for all the branches of the vine
including our own parish of Central Exeter,
body of Christ, people of Christ.

May we love our neighbour as ourselves

Our prayer today is for the creation gifts,
this earth in all its mighty wonder, yet tender fragility,
the gifts of life and resources to treasure.

May we love our neighbour as ourselves

Our prayer today is for those who lie close to our hearts
those whom we worry about, those whom we miss,
those who carry disproportionate burdens at this time ...

The Lord our God is one:

We will love with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength,
and our neighbour as ourselves.

*(Adapted from the Church of Scotland's Starters for Sunday website.
<http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/>)*

The Peace

If alone, smile and hug yourself (God does). If otherwise, share the Peace as appropriate.

A short Spiritual Communion

The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

O God,
help me to trust you,
help me to know that you are with me,
help me to believe that nothing
can separate me from your love
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

An offertory prayer

We may not be in church, but we can still offer ourselves and our talents to God.

Blessed are you, God and creator of the universe,
as we offer you our activities, thanksgivings and our life.
We present ourselves, and our world, as we are and as you can make us,
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours,
and of your own do we give you. Blessed be God for ever.

As we prepare for communion you might like to listen to Spirit of the Living God sung for us here by the virtual choir of North Stoneham and Basset church, Southampton.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rILf6IVG9sM&list=PLXItT602f9jTAwK2R4L2P1LJhfdR2dqXh&index=14>



Because there is no Breaking and Sharing we can have only Spiritual Communion with Christ. I'm sure you can find a way to use a few minutes of silence or conversation to enjoy this, and make it a sacramental moment.



Giving thanks for Christ's death and resurrection you may wish to say

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

Post Communion Collect

God of all grace,
your Son Jesus Christ fed the hungry
with the bread of his life
and the word of his kingdom:
renew your people with your heavenly grace,
and in all our weakness
sustain us by your true and living bread;
who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

Commissioning and blessing

Hear this: the Lord our God is the one and only Lord.
Therefore go out into the world
and love the Lord your God
with all your heart, soul, mind and strength,
and love others as you love yourself.

And may God give you justice and freedom;
May Christ Jesus set you free for love;
and may the Holy Spirit go where you go
and protect you on your way.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
In the name of Christ. Amen.
(*Nathan Nettleton LaughingBird.net*)

Closing Music

We close this morning with a group of Israeli Christians singing 'Fire of your Spirit' filmed in the old city of Jerusalem. A joyful celebration. Sung in Hebrew, but the words appear in English on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IK-aXgSMj90>

Coffee Break

This poem by Malcolm Guite is the fifth of a series of five dialogues between the speaker and Christ over the 'Greatest Commandment'.

My Neighbour as myself

My neighbour as myself? I cannot learn
To love myself at all. I look away,
The dark glass only shames me and I burn
At what should never see the light of day.

*I'll be the judge of that, for in my light
Judgment and healing meet you equally.
The self you loathe is precious in my sight
And I will have you love it into me.
You and your neighbour, both must made whole.
Her heart's as dark and needy as your own,
So you must love her in her hidden soul,
The very soul she's trying to disown.
Love her as you are loved and you will find
Love is your heart, your soul, your strength, your mind.*

Malcolm Guite

You can hear Malcolm reading this poem, by following the link below and scrolling down the page to the appropriate spot.

<https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/2016/06/09/5-dialogues-5-your-neighbour-as-yourself/>

Scroll down for Night Prayer

Night Prayer

20th Sunday after Trinity

25 October 2020

'Let the word of Christ
dwell in you richly'

Preparation

Father God,
We rest in you.

Jesus the Son,
We rest in you.

Holy Spirit,
We rest in you.

Silence

Who do we follow...

A teacher?
You were a good teacher,
Full of wisdom,
A moral compass,
Guidance
For the journey.

Who do we follow...

A prophet?
You were indeed a prophet,
Bringing God's word
Of love, justice,
And freedom
For the journey.

Who do we follow...

A friend?
You were certainly friend
To outcast and sinner,
Feeding the weak,
Lightening the load
For the journey.



*If you are able to do so, you might
wish to light a candle near a
window.*

Who do we follow...
All of these,
None of these,
For as this world's Saviour
You are all of these
And so much more,
As you take the very least of us,
And make the very most of us.

Who do we follow?
Jesus Christ,
Our Saviour.

(John Birch on faithandworship.com)

Opening hymn

'We have a Gospel to Proclaim'. The words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-SPYAgCtkw>

Prayer for Forgiveness

The world teaches us many ways to love,
but all are based on selfish desires and needs.
God teaches us how to love: completely, uniquely, unconditionally.

Let us confess our difficulty in loving as God teaches us,

We are hesitant to confess, Holy God,
how hard it is to love as you wish.
It is easy to love you with all that we are,
except when you ask us to love our neighbour with all that we have.

We find it hard to love our neighbour,
when it is linked to the way we love ourselves.
And it is difficult to love anyone—even You—
more than we love ourselves.

Forgive us, Love Eternal.
As you took a risk in creating us,
help us to take risks to love others compassionately,
to love ourselves genuinely,
and to love you as completely as you love us
in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.



Assurance of Pardon

In God's Kingdom, all are loved for who they are,
not what they do;
In God's Kingdom, all are forgiven for what they do,
and don't;

in God's Kingdom, all are welcomed and fed
by God's grace and hope.
Forgiven, loved, sent forth—
Thanks be to God. Amen.

(Thom Shuman, and posted on Lectionary Liturgies. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.ca/>)

The Lord's prayer

Our Father and Mother
who are in all the earth
holy is your truth.
May your wisdom come,
your circle be one uniting heaven and earth.
Give us today a nurturing spirit,
heal through us as we ourselves are healed.
Lead us into Fullness of life,
and liberate all that is good.
For the Wisdom, Presence and the Goodness are Yours
now and forever Amen.

(Adapted from a format used by a group of Dominican Sisters at a retreat in Kansas in 1993)

Old Testament Reading

The reading appointed for today is from the prophet Nehemiah

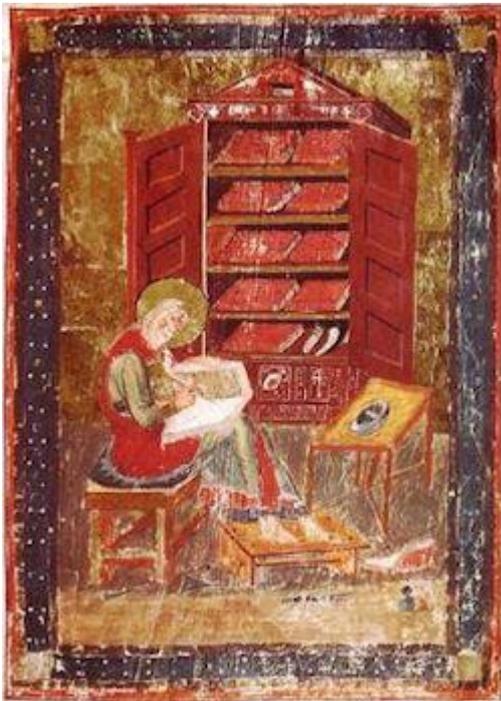
Nehemiah 8:1-4, 8-12

By the seventh month the people of Israel were all settled in their towns. On the first day of that month they all assembled in Jerusalem, in the square just inside the Water Gate. They asked Ezra, the priest and scholar of the Law which the Lord had given Israel through Moses, to get the book of the Law. So Ezra brought it to the place where the people had gathered—men, women, and the children who were old enough to understand. There in the square by the gate he read the Law to them from dawn until noon, and they all listened attentively. Ezra was standing on a wooden platform that had been built for the occasion. The Levites gave an oral translation of God's Law and explained it so that the people could understand it.

When the people heard what the Law required, they were so moved that they began to cry. So Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra, the priest and scholar of the Law, and the Levites who were explaining the Law told all the people, "This day is holy to the Lord your God, so

you are not to mourn or cry. Now go home and have a feast. Share your food and wine with those who don't have enough. Today is holy to our Lord, so don't be sad. The joy that the Lord gives you will make you strong.”

The Levites went around calming the people and telling them not to be sad on such a holy day. ¹²So all the people went home and ate and drank joyfully and shared what they had with others, because they understood what had been read to them.



The Scribe Ezra at work! This is an illustration from the Codex Amiatinus, the earliest complete manuscript of the Vulgate Bible (translated into Latin by St Jerome), and produced c700 at Jarrow-Monkwearmouth Abbey in Northumbria. St Bede was most likely involved in its production.

This is the only survivor of three such Bibles made, and was intended as a gift to Pope Gregory II. Abbot Ceolfrid was taking it to Rome in 716 when he died en route. The Bible may have been donated by an eleventh century Pope to an abbey in Tuscany. It is currently in Florence.

New Testament Reading Colossians 3:12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Reflection

'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly'

In the Book of Common Prayer and the Alternative Service Book, Bible Sunday was the Second Sunday in Advent with Cranmer's collect. For many years I have either spoken or listened to sermons where the words of the collect about the scriptures '*to hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them*' provided the structure. They also provided encouragement and challenge to approach the bible in different ways – attentively listening, reading, studying with notes or commentaries, alone or in groups, learning verses or passages by heart, and meditating. The Revised Common Lectionary which we now use suggests that Bible Sunday is moved to the last Sunday in ordinary time, and there are alternative readings for the three-year cycle. The Nehemiah and Colossians passages are the Old and New Testament readings for Year A.

The story from Nehemiah comes after the task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem following the exile is complete, and now is the time to rebuild and renew the people of God. It is one that I like for various reasons – the sense of community as the people gather together and the solemnity of the occasion with Ezra on the platform reading in Hebrew; the Levites who (probably) translated to Aramaic and explained the passage to small groups, and then the response of the people as they understand what God required of them. A response that began with penitence, with an awareness of how they had failed to follow God's ways, led onto rejoicing and generosity in sharing food with those in need. Here is a situation I can visualise and one that I can more easily translate to life today than many other passages from the Old Testament. It is an encouragement to study the bible, with others when possible, and to respond in prayer and action.

Writing to the new communities of believers in Colossians, *God's chosen ones*, after the list of virtues to wear and exhortations to unity within the group, there is this call to '*let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*'. In a similar passage in Ephesians the call is to be '*filled with the Spirit*'. This is not a competition between word and Spirit but both working together. Both lead to thanksgiving and to praise. We need both in our lives.

At St Olave's the gospel reading was Matthew 9:9-13 with the call of Matthew and his immediate obedience to follow Jesus whatever the consequences (v9). Next comes the scene in which the Pharisees complain to Jesus's disciples about the company Jesus is keeping – with sinners and tax -collectors. Jesus' rebuff includes the memorable phrase that it is only the sick who need a doctor, before he challenges them in v13 to learn from their scripture and quotes Hosea 6:6a. '*Go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice."* For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.' Hosea 6:6b continues with this important phrase '*the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.*'

The way we come to know God is through the scriptures. This is the risk God has taken in 'being revealed to us through words, through texts, through literary genres, through the weaknesses and fallibilities of human authors, the errors of scribes and translators, and all the flaws, fallacies, and fantasies of human speaking and human hearing.' (Christopher Bryan, *And God Spoke*, 2002). The bible is not an instruction manual on how to live a good

life but rather, in the words of Corrie ten Boom, a collection of 'love letters' from God. That is a challenge to me when I sometimes hurriedly read a bible passage and rush away without responding to whatever God may be saying to me for that day. Am I listening? Is God's word dwelling in me richly?

We listen to a song

'May the mind of Christ my Saviour' sung here as a solo in All Saints Church, Little Shelford, Cambridge. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGLnNKHCur4>

Affirmation of Faith

I believe in an innovative God,
who does not wait for us to find ourselves
but comes seeking the lost and calling us into a new way.

I believe in Jesus of Nazareth as God's crucial initiative,
that when he calls us to follow, Christ also gives us the power
to become, both in creed and deed, the children of the living God.

I believe in the Spirit by whom Jesus still comes to us,
calling us to follow him into an obedience which is true liberty
and to a humble service which is the fruit of holy friendship.

I believe in the church as the fellowship of Christ's people,
called to respect and support one another through joys and tribulations
as we travel the road towards the "promised land" of God's future.

Because Christ has called me
in this I truly believe.
Amen.

(written by Bruce Prewer, on Bruce Prewer's Homepage.)

Meditation

We have a call!
To be loved
and to love.
To be shown mercy
and to show mercy.
To be forgiven
and to forgive.



To receive hope
and to offer hope .
To know joy
and share joy.
To feel peace
and bring peace.
To be made whole
and offer wholeness.
We have a call
Listen...
Listen...
Do you hear?

(John Birch)

Prayer for Others

Let us pray to our kind and merciful God that his love for us may drive all we do and that our love may become contagious. Let us say:
Lord, make us instruments of your love.

- That the Church may never cease to proclaim by its teaching, life and liturgy that love of God and neighbour is the heart of the gospel and that people are God's gift to us:
Lord, make us instruments of your love.

- That people may not lose their hearts in today's economic systems of profit, efficiency, production and competition, but that they may keep giving first place to human relationships of friendship and respect, let us pray:
Lord, make us instruments of your love.

- That we may have room in our hearts and homes for refugees and strangers, that we may learn to share our goods and ourselves with the poor and the lonely and those who suffer:
Lord, make us instruments of your love.

- That those who don't know how to forgive, those who have not experienced much happiness in life or whose longings have not been fulfilled may encounter some of God's goodness in our attention and care, let us pray:
Lord, make us instruments of your love.

- That in our Christian communities we may uplift one another rather than tear down, accept each other with trust and affection, forgive one another from the heart and go forward together in hope and love, let us pray:
Lord, make us instruments of your love.

Our gentle God, help us to love you and one another with your measure, that is, without measure, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

(from Liturgies Alive, Models of Celebration.)

Commission and Blessing

Almighty God, give us wisdom to perceive you,
intellect to understand you,
diligence to seek you,
patience to wait for you,
eyes to behold you,
a heart to meditate upon you
and life to proclaim you,
through the power of the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Benedict, 489-543

God's love surround you, God's Spirit guide you,
God's whisper cheer you, God's peace calm you,
God's shield protect you, God's wisdom arm you,
wherever God may lead you.

Closing music

'Siyahamba' – A Zulu hymn from South Africa -We are marching in the light of God', sung by the Shalom Ensemble with an enthusiastic congregation in Bolton. Words in Zulu and English are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ue4iT56z1OU>

Thanks

To Chris for reflections this morning, Sheila for this evening.

