

# 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2022

## 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:** Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Song:**

My song is love unknown,  
My Saviour's love to me;  
Love to the loveless shown,  
That they might lovely be.  
O who am I,  
That for my sake  
My Lord should take  
Frail flesh, and die?

He came from His blest throne  
Salvation to bestow;  
But men made strange, and none  
The longed-for Christ would know:  
But oh, my Friend,  
My Friend indeed,  
Who at my need  
His life did spend.

Sometimes they strew His way,  
And His sweet praises sing;  
Resounding all the day  
Hosannas to their King:  
Then "Crucify!"  
Is all their breath,  
And for His death  
They thirst and cry.

They rise and needs will have  
My dear Lord made away;  
A murderer they save,  
The Prince of life they slay.  
Yet cheerful He  
To suffering goes,  
That He His foes  
From thence might free.

In life, no house, no home  
My Lord on earth might have;  
In death, no friendly tomb,  
But what a stranger gave.  
What may I say?  
Heav'n was His home;  
But mine the tomb  
Wherein He lay.

Here might I stay and sing,  
No story so divine;  
Never was love, dear King,  
Never was grief like Thine.  
This is my Friend,  
In whose sweet praise  
I all my days  
Could gladly spend.

## **Living in Love**

## **Read 1 Thessalonians 4: 9-12, Matthew 6: 1-4**

Acts 17 tells us Paul preached on three successive Sabbaths in the Thessalonica synagogue. Opposition arose – and Paul was smuggled out of town. He travelled on, but sent Timothy back to find out how things were in the Thessalonian church. The good news was a report of the Thessalonians' faith and love, their loyalty and their steadfastness under persecution. The bad news: the Thessalonians needed correction and instruction in the areas of sexual morality, about earning their own living, and about the second coming of Jesus. Paul wrote to remind the Thessalonians to behave and live as he has told and instructed them: Christian behaviour, 'how the church must live according to the gospel' (See Verses 1, 2, 6 and 11).

Does the Christian church in this country reflect Biblical teaching and behaviour? Does the church teach adherence to God's moral law and remind us (1 Corinthians 6) – our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit so our lives should be different from other lives around us? Or does it succumb to culture? ('Culture eats values for breakfast') Paul's writing suggests massive ethical questions: the respect for the sanctity and quality of human life; personal honesty and integrity; simplicity of lifestyle and contentment in contrast to the evident greed of the consumer society.

Taking this further, how many of the Ten Commandments are adhered to, even loosely, in society today, in the culture of today? The model church should align with God's moral law, as should our moral compass.

Many churches, today, strive to be (culturally) inclusive, but ignore the very essence of what makes God's Kingdom exclusive – the need to repent and change.

In the parable of the wedding banquet (Matthew 22) those invited refused to come; the servants were sent to invite anyone they could find – both good and bad. One guest was thrown out for not wearing wedding clothes. Why? The invitation was to all on the highways and the byways. But we cannot expect to enter the king's presence and go on living the life we led before we met Jesus Christ. We must be clothed in a new purity, a new holiness, a new goodness, and align to God's moral compass. The door is open – but not to the sinner who wants to enter yet remain a sinner. It is open to the one who wants to become a saint.

The text of Chapter 4 has to be read in context. Verse 11, "You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you." Chapter 5

records the Thessalonian focus on the Lord's return. Some were idle, having given up work – probably unwilling, not unable, to work, awaiting the Lord.

Paul says to work for one's own living is a mark of love, whereas to stop working, and depend on the support of others, is a breach of love because we become parasites. Christians should go about our daily tasks quietly, diligently and efficiently, living lives as one family that supports and encourages one another.

The Thessalonians were – to Paul's delight – living this life of practical love, taking care of one another financially, and supported other churches in Macedonia (implying they were quite wealthy), but Paul questions the restless desire to 'better themselves' (the 'me me me' – 'I want therefore I must have' - in our culture today). Paul tells us to lead a quiet life, mind our own business. In 2 Thessalonians 3: 11ff, Paul said because they were 'not busy' with their own business – they were idle - they had become 'busybodies', meddling in other people's matters.

There is no issue about supporting the unwaged, the unemployed, who want to work but can't find work. The issue is idleness – when work is available, but people don't want it and instead sponge off others. It is an expression of love to support those who are in need – but it is also an expression of love to support ourselves, so we don't depend on the support and generosity of others.

Outsiders looking at those of us who proclaim Jesus is Lord will look at our lifestyle. Financial behaviour, and sexual behaviour, are visible signs of the health and integrity of life within the 'Model Church'. Failure to contribute fully to the wider mission of the church across this Diocese possibly reflects tight fistedness, a selfish, controlling, spirit. Our God is a generous God – does the culture of CoGS ('model church') reflect God's generosity to our diocese, in our culture? The human reaction to shortage is to have closed hands and retain what we have. Closed hands can neither receive, nor give. The Law of Supply: "When supply seems to have failed, you must know that it has not done so. You must look around to see what you can give away. Give away something."

What instruction would Paul write to CoGS today? He said to the Thessalonians: we instructed you how to live in order to please God; avoid sexual immorality; control you own body; don't wrong your brother; work with your hands. That Paul had to write these reminders suggest the Thessalonians were not so living, and were still embracing the culture of their day. The model church discovers what love in practice feels like and looks like, and is counter-cultural.

**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 justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, neighbours, and for family & friends.
- Pray for the Church.

**Collect: Second Sunday after Trinity:**



*Lord, you have taught us that all our doings without love are nothing worth: send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love, the true bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whoever lives is counted dead before you. Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake, 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, The Good Shepherd, 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:** We are now holding services in the building on Sundays at 8am and 9.30am, and are live streaming the 9.30 service. This Paper Service will continue for the moment and is generally available the week after the service.

- Tea and Chat and Bowls: Wed. 20<sup>th</sup> July at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Holiday at Home: 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> July. Contact Frank Maloney.
- Tea and Praise for Harvest, Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 3pm – 4.30pm
- COGS Tots: 2<sup>nd</sup> Mondays. COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.