

Traditional Home service

Sunday 9th May

OPENING PRAYER

O God the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven:
we beseech you, leave us not comfortless, but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is gone before, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Let us return to the Lord our God and say to him:

**Lord our God,
in our sin we have avoided your call.
Our love for you is like a morning
cloud,
like the dew that goes away early.
Have mercy on us;
deliver us from judgement;
bind up our wounds and revive us;
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts. Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (Crown him with many crowns)

READINGS - Acts 10.44-48

1 John 5.1-6
John 15.9-17

TALK

CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Spend some time praying for our nation, our community and our families.

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.

HYMN 2 (My song is love unknown)

CONCLUSION

God, who from the death of sin raised you to new life in Christ, keep you from falling and set you in the presence of his glory; and the blessing; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

HYMNS TO USE

1 Crown him with many crowns,
the Lamb upon his throne.
Hark! how the heavenly anthem
drowns
all music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing
of him who died for thee,
and hail him as thy matchless king
through all eternity.

2 Crown him the Lord of life,
who triumphed o'er the grave,
and rose victorious in the strife
for those he came to save;
his glories now we sing
who died and rose on high,
who died eternal life to bring,
and lives that death may die.

3 Crown him the Lord of love;
behold his hands and side,
rich wounds, yet visible above,
in beauty glorified;
no angels in the sky
can fully bear that sight,
but downward bends their burning
eye
at mysteries so bright.

4 Crown him the Lord of years,
the potentate of time,
creator of the rolling spheres,
ineffably sublime.
All hail, Redeemer, hail!
for thou hast died for me;
thy praise shall never, never fail
throughout eternity.

1 My song is love unknown,
my saviour's love for me;
love to the loveless shown
that they might lovely be:
but who am I, that for my sake
my Lord should take frail flesh and
die?

2 He came from heaven's throne
salvation to bestow;
but they refused, and none
the longed-for Christ would know:
this is my friend, my friend indeed,
who at my need his life did spend.

3 Sometimes they crowd 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.

4 Why, what has my Lord done
to cause this rage and spite?
he made the lame to run,
and gave the blind their sight:
what injuries! yet these are why
the Lord most high so cruelly dies.

5 They rise and they must have
my dear Lord done away;
a murderer they save,
the prince of life they slay!
Yet willingly, to shame he goes
that he his foes, from this, might free.

6 Here might I stay and sing
of him my soul adores;
never was love, dear King,
never was grief like yours!
This is my friend in whose sweet
praise
I all my days could gladly spend.

So, as the father has loved me, so I have loved you, Jesus says.

My command is this, love each other as I have loved you,

This is my command, love each other.

There is a lot of love going on here.

I love cheese sandwiches, Lamb curry, lemon meringue pie. I love the colour blue. We use the word so lightly, and so often. How can the affection I show towards a cheese sandwich be the same word I use for the love of God. There should be a separate word, to show the enormity of God's love, but there isn't one. Words cannot express it, because we don't fully understand it. God's love is not of this world, how could we as mere humans understand it.

All we can do is experience it, dwell in it, We can let it change our lives. It enables us to love others, to always see the good in people and the world around us. It gives me the desire to help others, and pass on that love.

But a word that describes it alludes me, but it should not be the same word you associate with your favourite colour, cheese sandwiches, or anything else for that matter. We can't even liken it to the love we hold for our friends and our loved ones. The love we hold for the people around us is fragile. Its subject to disappointment, resentment, jealousy, envy. Our relationships can involve violence, ridicule, mental anguish and deep sadness. What was once a great loving relationship can so very quickly turn so very sour. The divorce rates show us this unfortunate reality.

The love of God, the love that, as Jesus tells us, he received from the father and wants to pass on to us, is unconditional. Whatever you have done, However bad it was, he loves you. No matter how many times you do it, he loves you, he cares for you, he wants to help you through it. God doesn't have to think about it. He doesn't say, What again,

how many more times, it is a permanent, persistent love that will not go away. His love and forgiveness doesn't change, in fact there is no need for forgiveness, he just loves. God's love is devoid of all human elements. You may be disappointed with yourself, and other people, but God won't be, he takes us as we are. He spoke love into our hearts before we could speak and gave us love before we were able to give it to others.

It is all encompassing love, not just some gushy, puppy phenomenon that our generation thinks of when we hear the term.

It is joy, peace, happiness, contentment, strength, confidence, it is everything good rolled in to one. It is there for everyone, all we have to do is receive it, and once you do receive it you will just want more. The more we realize this love the more godly we become, the more human we become. We realise our potential and the world opens up to new possibilities, a new level of happiness because only through Gods love can we become what we were truly meant to be.

Jesus is the person he is because of the fathers love and he wants to share that with us. To make us whole and complete.

That is why he tells us in verse 11, I have told you all this so your joy may be complete. Remain in my love by keeping my commands as I have kept the fathers commands and remain in his love.

Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has one than this, to lay down one's life for one's friend. You are my friends if you do what I command.

I was trying to think of some characteristics of the word friendship and what it means. When I was researching this, I came across a note written in a student's study book which was published on the internet which said, friendship is a pair of welcome arms in a armless society.

Mark Twain said of friendship, it is so sweet and steady and loyal a nature, that it will last a whole lifetime, if not asked to lend money.

Friends care about each other's welfare. We want the best for each other, we want people to think well of you. We want no harm to come to our friends, but quite often deep friendships are forged through common suffering, Soldiers returning from war will speak angrily about the meaning of it but they will talk with warmth about their friends and comrades. People that go through disasters together will find themselves friends for life, reminiscing over old times. And what they went through together, the suffering has passed but their friendship remains.

Friends also share their material possessions, even money, despite Mark Twain's comment. But more importantly, we share what is inside, our emotions ,fears and worries. C S Lewis says, friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another, what you too? I thought I was the only one. We laugh together we cry together and sometimes a person will lay down his life for a friend.

In the Vietnam war a small village was bombed, a school full of children and their teachers took the brunt of the blast. Lots of dead and injured children were scattered around the village. They sent out a messenger for help and returned with an American naval officer and a French nurse. They were both treating a eight year old girl and it became obvious that she would die where she to not receive a blood transfusion. Neither of the medics spoke Vietnamese, so with sign language and a few words they asked the other children would anyone be willing to save the girls life by giving some blood. None of the children responded so they asked a second time. A little boy put his hand up then put it down, then put it back up. Thankyou the nurse said in French and proceeded to insert the needle. The boy then began to cry and when they asked him if it hurt, he indicated that it didn't but he was very distressed. A passer-by who did speak Vietnamese, heard the boy and went to see if she could help. She spoke to him, stroked his head and he stopped crying and started to smile. The nurse asked what was wrong with him, and was told the boy thought you

meant he had to give all his blood to save the little girl. Why would you have done that, she asked through the interpreter. He replied, because she was my friend.

I have only had one friend like that. He laid down his life for me at a place called Calvary, outside the city wall overlooking a rubbish dump. It was there that my friend and yours died that we might live.

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for ones friends.

How do we become Jesus friend and receive that love.

You are my friends if you do what I have commanded you, Jesus says. But friendship with Jesus is not just simply about following some rules. The command is to love one another as I have loved you. In other words, if you want to be my friend, be a friend to my other friends. That sounds so simple, what would the world look like today if everyone did that one simple thing I wonder.

We did not come across this relationship with Jesus by chance or accident. Jesus tells us in verse 16. That you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you.

This reminds me of school, standing there in a line hoping not to be the last one picked, and it was usually the same ones every week who no one wanted, standing there alone because nobody picked them. Jesus picks every one, no one is left standing, we are all on the team if we want to be, tax collectors, fishermen, prostitutes and all the marginalised. He doesn't need star players, or clever pharisees, because we don't need to win. He did that for us when he went to the cross. We just need to take part, there is no competition, we just have to enjoy it with him.

Many years ago when I was fourteen every form in my school was asked to form a football team. My form didn't have any of my friends in it, just all the boffins, I was one of the horrible cool kids, so I declined the offer only to be told I had no choice by a very strict, rather scary Mr Austin head of foreign languages. The day before our first match I checked the board and saw that we were

playing the best footballers in the school, we are going to get hammered I thought. I was our best player and I can't play football. So I turned up, the following day and so did Paul the boffin and that's it. The best footballers in the school, against me and Paul, no one else showed. I thought great, they will cancel it. You two ready said Mr Austin. Sir our team hasn't turned up. Not my problem, stop whining and just get on with it.

We kicked off, me to Paul, Paul back to me, and then I toe punted it as hard as I could, straight into the back of the net. There we were, me and Paul the boffin, jumping up and down and cuddling, while the ace footballers shouted at each other, blaming each other, trying to decide who's fault it was. We held them off for ten minutes then alas, they put seventeen goals past us. The two of us were know the team, we turned up every week to get thrashed. We had such a great time because we had by now become quite famous. Mr Austin moved the matches from lesson time to lunch time so people could watch. We were the talk of the school. They turned up with banners, go Paul and Nigel, screaming us on. Although we never did manage to win a match. At the end of the tournament a trophy was awarded to the league winners, and then a prize for the bottom of the league. We got a bigger cheer than the best team, the famous duo. When I stood up and looked round for Paul, my new, shy, quiet introvert friend was running round the hall taking his bows, milking the applause, and he also got his first girlfriend.

It is about the taking part, not the winning, we are already on the winning team. It's about being, not having. It's about receiving that unconditional love that the father gave to the son in order for us to receive it from him.

Because god so loved his creation he wanted to take part in it, and so gave his one and only son that we may be saved.

It's about us being chosen by him to receive and enjoy the love of God that we may pass that love on to all of Jesus other friends. Enjoying this life to the full in all situations and circumstances looking forward to an even better life to come. Feeling

overwhelmed and over joyed with the love we receive.

We have God's unconditional love, we have a friend and we have been chosen

This is my command, Love each other.

This is the word of the lord.