

Traditional Home service

Sunday 5th February

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God,
by whose grace alone we are accepted
and called to your service:
strengthen us by your Holy Spirit
and make us worthy of our calling;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
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 admit to God the sin which always
confronts us.

*Father, we have sinned against heaven
and against you. We are not worthy to be
called your children. We turn to you
again. Have mercy on us, bring us back
to yourself as those who once were dead
but now have life through 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 (*Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts
inspire*)

READINGS - Isaiah 58.1-12
1 Cor 2.1-5
Matthew 5.13-16

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 (*O God beyond all praising*)

CONCLUSION

The Lord bless you and watch over you,
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you,
the Lord look kindly on you
and give you peace;
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

Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire,
Let us thine influence prove;
Source of the old prophetic fire,
Fountain of life and love.

Come, Holy Ghost - for, moved by
thee,
Thy prophets wrote and spoke -
Unlock the truth, thyself the key,
Unseal the sacred book.

Expand thy wings, celestial Dove,
Brood o'er our nature's night;
On our disordered spirits move,
And let there now be light.

God, through himself, we then shall
know,
If thou within us shine;
And sound, with all thy saints below,
The depths of love divine.

O God beyond all praising,
We worship you today
And sing the love amazing
That songs cannot repay;
For we can only wonder
At every gift you send,
At blessings without number
And mercies without end:
We lift our hearts before you
And wait upon your word,
We honour and adore you,
Our great and mighty Lord.

Then hear, O gracious Saviour,
Accept the love we bring,
That we who know your favour
May serve you as our king;
And whether our tomorrows
Be filled with good or ill,
We'll triumph through our sorrows
And rise to bless you still:
To marvel at your beauty
And glory in your ways,
And make a joyful duty
Our sacrifice of praise.

Sermon - Louise Morton
Isaiah 58 1-12; 1 Cor 2 1-5; Matthew 5 13-16

Our lives are made up of 100s of little decisions every day!

For example....

I'm looking through the reduced section in the co op, I love value! And a bargain!
I was bopped down going through items when a man came beside me to look too, we both wanted the curry! It was a bargain, I was there first! But I said to him that's ok you have it!
I do want to be the person that lets someone else have the curry! That lets someone in, in front of me because they have less shopping.
Little actions of grace ...

Obviously we're not all on our best form all the time! Sometimes I'm grumpy! Selfish....

On Wednesday I led a session for Chris at bouverie court about practical evangelism we had a discussion about the passage in Matthew,

Jesus said: You are the salt of the earth ..
Message Let me tell you why you are here.
You're here to be salt, seasoning that brings out the God flavours of this earth..
He didn't stop there...
You are the light of the world ..

Message: you're here to be light, bringing out the God colours in the world.

The first response from someone was: it's a responsibility! Yes! How true! ...we are salt we are light, so therefore He calls us to act accordingly!

This is worth noting, it's who we are that requires our behaviour to follow, we don't behave a certain way to be salt, light, it's because we are salt and light that our communities need us to step up! Being salt and light, that's kingdom living.

Part one: firstly let's think about what that means for us as individuals....

being salt, being light is primarily much more about what we do, who we are, how we behave than what we say..

Verse 16 let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

How did Jesus listeners, at the time, see salt? it was precious, expensive, necessary...
It was seen as pure, a preservative, and giving flavour.

Translating this into his followers behaviour what's he saying...? To be brief...

Pure= Live right, preservative = Barclay: a Christian person who by his presence defeats corruption and makes it easier for others to be good! .

Flavour= bringing out the God flavours of this earth, being delicious! Attractive, in verse 16 when Jesus says 'good works' he uses the word Kalos this word for good evidently includes the qualities of being winsome, attractive!

Our goodness should attract, not repel!
He didn't mean for us to be kill joys, Barclay: we need to discover the lost radiance of the Christian faith...

Does being a Christian help us bounce! Living our best life... because if not maybe we need to look again....

John 9 verse 5 Jesus said As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Here in Matthew he says to his followers: you are the light of the world ! We need to be like him, to act as he would in the various situations, places.. we find ourselves in.

It's his light that shines through us, light is something that can be seen, light acts as a guide, can be a warning.

This idea of being light is not a new concept that Jesus introduces, he's building on what's gone before.

Isaiah 58 verse 10 then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noon day! Another translation : glowing in the dark!

How will this light shine?

It's right behaviour : get rid of unfair practices, feed the hungry, clothe the naked(Isaiah aside, 3 years naked!) quit gossiping about the sins of others...be good to your family

This says the prophet is what God is interested in seeing them do.

St Francis : preach the gospel and if necessary use words!

Yes, we do need words, but right living comes first, and needs to run along side....other wise the words don't add up....

Being salt, being light, is about having our hearts right too, to do things with cheerfulness, with happiness, excitement... people notice... our heart often shows on our face!

It's not what you do but the way that you do it! It's a song I think!

And it's what Isaiah explores in the reading from chapter 58 on one hand their religion looks great: to all appearances they're a nation of right living people law abiding, God honouring...but that says the prophet is not really what's going on.... Turn around was needed, and with that great blessing, full life in the emptiest of places....

Laurence Singlehurst: Evangelism is not a methodology or a strategy, it needs to be an out working of love.

I love his sowing reaping and keeping book! He writes : Research has shown that most people who come to Christ first of all need five to seven positive experiences of Christianity.

Once we accept that idea, it takes all the pressure out of our evangelism and every one can feel part of the process.

The Holy Spirit is active through us in the entire process of loving people.

I know ! because people are often more than pleased to tell us! that bad experiences of Christians put people off, I've done research about dogs since we've had Bessie 😊😂😌 And it is said that a dog needs 100 good experiences to counteract one bad one, I'm not sure if we are the same but you get the idea...

If one of us are seen acting badly in whatever way, we can be moving people further away from believing in Jesus, it can be an excuse people jump on, but nevertheless it's us who've given them the place to jump!

Of course we're not going to get it right all the time, the wonderful mercy of forgiveness!thank you Jesus!

But we need I think, we have the responsibility! To at least be trying to head in the right direction! Holy Spirit help us! However when we get it right! When we walk in out in our identity as salt and light...how amazing it that!

Love getting to know little victories..

Eg Not taking offence over a fence, ie deciding to be gracious to an out of order neighbour! What love tastes like, an email I had from a new family over the pandemic about love in the form of cake ! Being delivered by one of our brilliant cake baking members!

I honestly believe, Seemingly small thing's done well, carry great weight in the kingdom, who knows when clearing up someone else's litter, volunteering to serve at 3 Cs, or in school, may be moving someone nearer to Jesus....

Part two: So that's thinking about us as individuals, what about as church, us corporate !

are we seen as salt and light in this community? Obviously these overlap....

Being the best we can be, what is our churches reputation ?

Is it generous, fun, most loving..... are we good news to our community. I love this verse about the early church...

Acts 2 v47 praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

The early church although persecuted, generally had the goodwill of those around them, they were seen as a blessing, they had favour...

For me one of my interfaces with the community in the name of church, are with our three schools, I'm always mindful of wanting to be seen as supportive, adding value being a blessing, not someone who goes in with an agenda.

Last year I started a toddler group, one year old last week!

We really took our time as a team, at the beginning, thinking through how we wanted to be, very happy with what we are offering, it's

free, donations optional, refreshments quality, delicious! We try and keep Refreshing the toys, equipment, we do good coffee, I'm learning and growing in doing toddler stuff!

Building relationships with the families, offering to pray for them sometimes.....

Each week to start the singing... We do the conga! Praise God above for all his love.. Sometimes at first it was only me, now it's a lovely time of dancing round!

I really hope we're giving families who come positive experiences of Christianity, that we are drawing them closer to Jesus through this group.

Seen the barriers come down in one family in particular.....

When we are planning stuff it's worth thinking about salt and light...

Does this show God flavours? God colours? Are we being a blessing?

Perhaps all of us know stories of the church corporate being the opposite!

Dreadful scandals of terrible abuse.... Also more locally a story of a handbag.

Part three:

Want to come now to the Corinthians passage.

In going about as salt and light! In attempting to share our faith, it's ok to feel inadequate! It's ok to be scared! Paul came to the Corinthians in fear and trembling! Feeling totally inadequate.

Our priority needs to be the people we're loving, the people we're wanting to serve. As many of you know I am probably one of the least tuneful, unrhythmic people on the planet!

When each Tuesday I set off doing the conga, I'm aware I am ridiculous!

But I've decided it doesn't matter, no one will worry about joining in when someone as dreadful as me is doing it!

And I think Jesus loves it! I'm not saying we should deliberately go about doing the things we're bad at, but I think there are occasions when it's required, and it's in the end a joy to us, and a witness to others...

Paul says he kept it simple, he spoke of Jesus, who he is and what he did.

when we speak to others about our faith let's try and keep it simple, let's use normal language, our own experiences and stories are so very good.

I try and fold in Jesus! In my conversations... When I'm asked about why we have such a mad dog!

Why we foster...

I've told people calming Bessie is like the hymn, Jesus calls us o'er the tumult... this person answered oh! So you're Jesus to your dog!

Which may be very mixed up theologically, but at least they got some idea of how I see

Jesus, and they weren't a Christian 😊!

Barclay relates the story of someone who'd been 'a reprobate and drunkard' who'd come to Christ, he'd be tormented by his work mates, saying such things as surely you can't believe the miracles, the water into wine.

The man would say whether he turned water into wine or not, I do not know, but in my house I've seen him turn beer into furniture! No one can argue with changed lives!

Paul acknowledged God's power at work, verse 5 : God's Spirit and God's power did it, which made it clear that your life of faith is a response to God's power, and not some fancy mental or emotional footwork by me or any one else.

The Lord loves us to give him the opportunity to work in someone's life! I've had a few occasions recently when I've managed to pray randomly for people out and about!

And it is encouraging! Someone's chilblains in Rushden, a family awaiting the birth of a baby... please Lord more opportunities... Lucy gave an account of her healing, it was wonderful and as we spilled out of the side door and came across the man with the retriever I couldn't help but blurt out the good news of Jesus alive and his ability to heal us... as I've reflected! I know I could of done this better! But I'm glad I said something!