

*Christ Church New
Southgate & Friern Barnet*

20 February 2022

Welcome to our service led by Ola Lawal

Hymn Praise, my soul, the King of heaven,

Prayer of Confession

Almighty God, we confess before you our own sin. We have not loved you with our whole being; we have not loved our neighbour as ourselves.

In your mercy, forgive us when we turn from you; release us from the burden of our past, and remake us in your image and Likeness through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayers followed by The Lord's Prayer (with action)

Hymn – This little light of mine

Bible Reading 1 – Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40

All-Age talk / Bible Reading 2 – Luke 6:27-38

Luke 6:27-38

“But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you. If anyone hits you on one cheek, let him hit the other one too; if someone takes your coat, let him have your shirt as well.

Give to everyone who asks you for something, and when someone takes what is yours, do not ask for it back. Do for others

just what you want them to do for you. “If you love only the people who love you, why should you receive a blessing? Even sinners love those who love them!

And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you receive a blessing? Even sinners do that! And if you lend only to those from whom you hope to get it back, why should you receive a blessing? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount!

No! Love your enemies and do good to them; lend and expect nothing back. You will then have a great reward, and you will be children of the Most High God. For he is good to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge others, and God will not judge you; do not condemn others, and God will not condemn you; forgive others, and God will forgive you.

Give to others, and God will give to you. Indeed, you will receive a full measure, a generous helping, poured into your hands—all that you can hold. The measure you use for others is the one that God will use for you.”

Hymn Breathe on me, breath of God:

Sermon

Let us pray:

Gracious God, open our hearts and minds, that we may receive what you have revealed, and do what you have commanded. Amen.

The title of my sermon is ‘Love all.

In the Luke 6:27-38 passage that we read earlier, Jesus told His listeners love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. Bless and pray for those who mistreat you. If anyone hits you on one cheek, let him hit the other one too; Give and lend freely to those

who cannot repay you. Be non-judgemental and merciful.

In the passage, Jesus agreed it is easier for us to love the loveable and give to those who can repay us, but the real gauntlet He threw in the passage is the invitation to dig deeper and love the enemy too. To love, those who are mean to us or do not meet up to our expectations. To love those we consider as free-loaders who always ask for what they cannot pay back. To love those we consider as different from us because of their colour, race, religion, gender, political persuasion and so on.

There is no doubt these words of Jesus are challenging, illogical and difficult. They are contrary to our human nature and virtually impossible. I remember someone saying 'I do not take anything lying down. If anyone steps on my toes, I will not only step on their toes but walk all over them.' A sad statement, but meant by the person. Our rational human reaction is to hurt back harder those who hurt us or to ridicule more those we disapprove of us. The last thing that comes to us is to do the opposite or let the light of God overshadow the darkness of our malice, hatred, revenge or resentment.

What Jesus was asking his listeners to practice is Agape. A Christian love, described as whole-hearted, unreserved and unconditional desire for the well-being of the others whether family, friend or enemy. This radical love for all is the free gift of Jesus to each one of us. It is humanly impossible but with God's help all things are possible. God can make it easier for us to rise up to the challenge of returning good for evil with the help of the Holy Spirit who indwells us. He will help us to remember God's abundant grace, love and compassion in all situations, especially the difficult ones and to put it into practice.

The teaching of Jesus to love our enemy may sound irrational but the truth is, God is good

to all, the just and unjust, saint and sinner. This is why Jesus want us to seek the greatest good of others even those who hate and abuse us just as He seeks our highest good. When we do this, it may help the evil person to change their ways and even start to follow Jesus.

We can leave God to deal with the evil ones who refuse to change. Psalm 37 vs 1-2 tells us 'Don't be worried on account of the wicked; don't be jealous of those who do wrong. They will soon disappear like grass that dries up. They will die like plants that wither.

Jesus went on to say we should not judge or condemn. This is because exercising God's love and grace instead judging and condemning, has the power to heal and to save the person from destruction. God is the Judge who will repay everyone according to their deeds. We have no business rushing to judge or condemn anyone based on our narrow, personal expectations. Judging or condemning others may result in the person being stigmatised, stereotyped or demeaned. It may also excuse us from the moral obligation to treat those we dislike well.

Jesus wants us to encounter Him in all situations and to try and see his love and grace in each one. (To always ask ourselves every time what will Jesus do). It is this God's abundant grace that makes Christians different from others. It is this grace that will help us to treat others especially our enemies not as they deserve, but as God wishes, which is with loving-kindness and mercy.

So how do we encounter God in all situations and be more Christ-like in our response in the face of evil? The answers are: One: To draw closer to God through regular prayer, asking Him to help us to be more Christ-like. Two: To read the Bible regularly. 2 Timothy 16 tells us, 'All Scripture is inspired by God and is

useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living'. Three: regular fellowship with other Christians not just by going to church on Sundays but also the attendance of prayer meetings and bible-study.

Doing the three will help us to keep growing as Christians and to increase our righteousness. Which is a win-win going by what is written in Psalm 37vs. 39. 'The Lord saves the righteous and protects them in times of trouble. He helps them and rescues them; he saves them from the wicked, because they go to him for protection.'

Jesus finished his teaching with 'The measure you use for others is the one that God will use for you.' Jesus was not referring to just our giving with this statement but in regards to how we perform as a whole. His reward starts from here on earth, not just when we get to heaven. We may not get the queen's honour that is given to people described as extraordinary on the government's website or anything we perceive as a tangible reward.

However, it is doubtful many of us don't get that feeling of self-satisfaction, even joy when we help someone in need especially the one who do not deserve it. Or see the joy of someone we oblige their request when the answer expected is a 'No'. Or the relief and at times the tears of joy of the person we forgive. These human reactions to our love and grace, in my opinion beat any honours. Another good thing is that loving all may also open new opportunities for us and in unexpected places.

We do not have to be extraordinary like those on the Queen's honours list. All Jesus expects of us is to love all, especially the enemy, in simple, useful ways in the power of the Holy Spirit. To spread love and God's truth. To do for others just what you want them to do for

you. To promote His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. What are you going to do for others this week, just as you want done to you, especially the enemy?

Let us pray.

Lord, thank you for your radical teaching to love our enemies. Fill us with your Holy Spirit. Set our hearts free from feeling bitter towards anyone. Help us to love all as you do. Amen

Prayer of Intercession

The response when I say Lord in your mercy is graciously hear us.

Lord in your mercy—graciously hear us

Eternal loving God, we bring our petitions to you in faith, that whatever we ask in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, we will receive.

We pray for your church throughout the world. Let her witness shine as light where darkness prevails. We ask for an outpouring of your Holy Spirit and a revival. We ask your help and blessing for the missionaries. Grant the reassurance of your love to those who cannot freely worship you. Draw back those who have turned away from the church since the pandemic. Help the new people who watched on line to take the step to fellowship inside the church.

We pray for our Christ Church New Southgate and Friern Barnet to be filled with your glory. We ask that our witness of your love, grace, mercy and eternal salvation will help many to accept you as Lord and Saviour and to follow you. Grant our minister, Revd. Ruth Moriarty a restful holiday. Renew her vigour and bless her work.

Lord in your mercy— graciously hear us

Notices

Blessing

For our world we pray for honest and compassionate leaders who will strive for peace, justice and equitable distribution of resources. We pray for peace in places of conflict and war. Change the hearts of those who nurture hatred and fill it with love. In the power of the Holy Spirit help us to show your grace and mercy especially to those we perceive as different or difficult. We pray for restoration for the victims of natural disasters. Put it on our hearts to selfless and zealous care for our world.

Lord in your mercy—graciously hear us

We pray for comfort and the reassurance of your love for all who mourn ----- Grant your divine healing to those suffering from ill-health -----. We pray for stronger family relationships. Protect our children from evil. Help them to keep growing in wisdom and in stature. Grant the teachers the strength and the wisdom to teach them well. We pray for the lonely, the poor, the neglected and so many others who need your light to shine in their darkness.

Lord in your mercy—graciously hear us

Loving God, we pray for ourselves, our families, friends and neighbours. Whatever the needs of your children here today may be, we ask your divine intervention, according to your forever good will for us.

In a moment of silence, let us lift up to God things on our hearts.

All these prayers we ask in the name O Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hymn Behold the Lamb who bears our sins away,

Communion

Hymn I stand amazed in the presence