

29 November 2020, 11am
*Christ Church New Southgate &
Friern Barnet*

Please join with us at 11am to read this service together either in printed form, whatapp or via the youtube link on our website www.christchurchnsfb.org

Each person in the church is assigned a deacon who will call you to see if you are alright in these times and to pray for you. Please feel free to call Ruth too if you wish – only happy to help! 020 8368 8157

Welcome

Psalm 28

Praise be to the Lord,

for he has heard my cry for mercy.

⁷The Lord is my strength and my shield;
my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.

My heart leaps for joy,

and with my song I praise him.

⁸The Lord is the strength of his people,
a fortress of salvation for his anointed one.

⁹Save your people and bless your inheritance;

be their shepherd and carry them forever.

Hymn: Amazing grace

1 Amazing grace – how sweet the sound –
that saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed.

3 Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

4 When we've been there ten thousand years
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we've first begun.

Guest speaker this week Rev. Neil Draisey, Beckenham Baptist Church speaking on Philippians 1.21-30 considering what is life? For St Paul who wrote Philippians – life centres on the joy of the Lord. What makes you joyful?

All age activity: Joy Alphabet

Print off the sheet for a joy alphabet, or just write out the alphabet and from A-Z think of things that make you happy, that remind you of the joy of the Lord.

Here are mine:

Acorns
Bumble bees
Christ Church
Dancing
Edward
Friends
Going out
Husband
Ice-cream
Jesus!
Kites
Lie-in
Mikey
Naan bread
Opera
Peonies
Quizzes
Roses
Salt and vinegar crisps
Tea
Understanding new things
Vines
Walking
Xi (scrabble winner!)
Yoghurt
Zebras

What are yours? Have a go !

Joy Alphabet

What gives you joy? Try and think of something that makes you happy that begins with each letter of the alphabet. Let us thank God for all that gives joy!

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

I

J

K

L

M

N

O

P

Q

R

S

T

U

V

W

X

Y

Z

Song: I'm gonna jump up and down

Lord's prayer

**Our Father in heaven, arms up
hallowed be your name, banner shape
your kingdom come, hands together
your will be done, side, out to side
on earth as in heaven. Palms down &
up
Give us today our daily bread. Hand
together cupped
Forgive us our sins brush right hand
as we forgive those who sin against us.
brush left hand
Lead us not into temptation fist to
chest across
but deliver us from evil. Other fist to
chest across
For the kingdom, arms wide
the power, fists lifted
and the glory are yours rain fingers
now and for ever. Right hand pointing,
left hand spiral finger out
Amen. Hands clap above head**

Confession prayer based on Psalm 51

**Create in me
a clean heart O God
And put a new and right spirit
within me.**

Do not cast away from your presence,
And do not take your Holy Spirit from me.

**Restore to me
the joy of your salvation
And sustain in me a willing spirit.**

Then I will teach transgressors your ways
And sinners will return to you

**O Lord open my lips
And my mouth
will declare your praise**

Reading: Philippians 1.21-30

Read by Bobsie Gordon

²¹For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. ²²But if *I* live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labour; yet what I shall choose I ²³cannot tell. ²⁴For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better. ²⁵Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you. ²⁶And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, ²⁷that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

²⁸Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, ²⁹and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but ³⁰to you of salvation, and that from God. ³¹For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, ³²having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear *is* in me.

Sermon: For me to live is Christ and to die is gain

Philippians 1.21-30

Rev. Neil Draisey, Beckenham Baptist Church

If I were to ask you what your philosophy of life was, what would you say? If you were to complete the sentence 'Life is ...' what would you say? Lots of people down through the ages have thought about this and have given their thoughts on this. The silent screen star Charlie Chaplin said: Life is a tragedy in short view but a comedy in long shot. Philosopher Voltaire said life is a struggle. The boxer Mohammed Ali said Life is a gamble.

Animator and film producer Walt Disney said: Life is a complex matter, and for Dolly Parton : Life is a song to me. The American rapper Eminem: Life is a crazy ride and nothing is guaranteed. The inventor James Dyson: Life is a mountain of solvable problems and I enjoy that. JM Barrie author of Peter Pan said : Life is a long lesson in humility, and Florence Nightingale: Life is a splendid gift.

There is a story told of a young man visiting the Prime Minister Gladstone and sharing with him his plans for his future saying that he wanted to study law. Gladstone replied, yes young man and then what? The young man said, ‘ and then I want to enter the bar’. Gladstone replied: ‘And then what?’ ‘I hope to move onto parliament and a seat in the house of Lords’ came the reply. ‘And then what?’ asked Gladstone. ‘I hope to do great things for Britain.’ ‘And then what?’ asked Gladstone. ‘Then I hope to retire and take life easy’ said the young man, ‘and then what?’ asked Gladstone. ‘And then I suppose I will die’ the young man said. ‘Yes, and then what?’ asked Gladstone. The young man hesitated and said : Mr Gladstone I have never thought any further than that Sir.’ Looking sternly and steadily at the young man Gladstone said : ‘you are a fool, go home and think life through.’ How do you answer the question: what is life?

In our reading from the apostle Paul to the Christians at Philippi; whose overarching theme is to show the believers that true joy comes from Jesus Christ alone. Paul is in reflective mood as he languishes under house arrest in Rome. Following the initial greetings and thanksgiving for the Philippians, he has spoken of how being in chains is serving the advancement of the gospel and encouraging others to speak the word of God boldly. And now he announces one of the most poignant and memorable statements in all of his letters to churches in the New Testament. For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

It has been described by a retired minister McLartey, as Paul’s autobiography in a word, the core of this faith, the basis of his hope and the reason for his existence. This is Paul’s response to completing that question ‘life is ...?’ And for the apostle, life means Jesus Christ. We don’t know for sure about the dates and age of Paul but from his conversion of the road to Damascus to his eventual execution in Rome around 64-67 AD that means his ministry lasted around 30 years. That is thirty years of meetings, speaking arrangements, sermons, prayers and the like, all focused on Jesus. And if Paul is to be anything like other Christians, we know that his love for Jesus grew, deepened and expanded as he learned more about his Lord and Master. That is why he can say life for him is all about Jesus and the work he has given him to do. Remember his conversion was the spark that set him on the road to proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ which was not always received with open arms and good will. Several times, Paul’s life was threatened for what he was saying and doing but the Lord brought him through so he could fulfil his god given mission. You see the thing is, for those who are not in Christ, who have not found new life in him, this life is all there is. It becomes natural to get the most out of this life, to strive for the world’s values and trappings: money, power, popularity, prestige. It’s what we can see all around us in all aspects of society; the more you have the better you’ll feel. The better you look, the more satisfied you’ll be. The more living to excess without regard to others, the happier you’ll become. And so the temptation is to fall into the trap of thinking that this life, these three score years and ten; 70 years, that Psalm 90.10 says is the length of our days is all that there is. But for Paul, to live, meant to develop eternal values and to tell others about Jesus who is the only way to help us to understand about the eternal perspective of life.

But what then of the second part of the apostle's statement, to die is gain. What are we to make of that? I wonder if you are comfortable talking about death and dying. For the most part I think we are uncomfortable about the whole subject for a number of reasons. Firstly, there is fear of the unknown. As the atheist philosopher – Bertrand Russell said ‘fear is the main source of superstition and one of the main sources of cruelty. To conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom.’ Of course if we never talk about something - fear can magnify because it is something that we are not addressing. Proverbs 9.10 tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. So are we to be afraid of God?

The word fear here, means a reverence, a respect for God which would make sense because God is after all creator and sustainer of all things. I'm reminded of the verse in Hebrews 10 that says ‘it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, meaning that for those who reject God and his gracious love and mercy, God's judgement will be passed down as it will on all of us. For Paul, he was confident in his faith. He could say with assurance, that death held no fear for him as he knew that he would spend eternity with God.

We also don't like to talk about death because – we don't like to talk about death. The actor Woody Allen said: I'm not afraid of death, but I just don't want to be there when it happens. Generally we like life, being with our friends and our families and doing all the things we have planned to do with our lives.

Maybe we are just too busy with life to think about death. Does it become just one more thing to add to our list of worries? Especially when there is little, we can do about it. It can be difficult to imagine the world without us, can't it and yet the reality is that death comes to us all at some point in time because death is a natural part of the cycle of life.

But maybe the simple reason that we don't talk about death is because we are conditioned not to talk about it. We are encouraged to be watchful of our health, exercise, eating habits. And so when death comes, when talking about death it is as if we are feeling defeated in the game of life, that we are talking about the great taboo that should not be mentioned.

For the apostle Paul, he had a very positive view of death because he knew that death would be far better than this life although he says that his life's mission is to proclaim Christ Jesus. Now this isn't some morbid death wish that Paul has, as the Philippian letter shows – he had lots of energy and life left in him but he is a man that is in love with his Saviour and Lord. And in that sense, death means that he will be with Jesus which for Paul is far better than life. He says, I desire to depart to be with Christ, which is far better. But is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. The word there ‘desire’ means an eagerness and passionate longing for something or someone, that is how much Paul longs to be with Jesus but his mission is not over. And he is obedient to the call of God on his life, so he concludes that it is better for him to continue the work that God has given to him.

There are lots of themes in today's passage, but the one I want you to focus on, in this coming week, is what is your answer to that question we posed right at the outset: Life is? And where does Jesus and your love and commitment to him fit into your answer? Amen

Intercession

LEADER: Son of Man, come in glory!

ALL: Come King Jesus.

We bring the world we live in before your throne, King Jesus.

Many nations suffer, their peoples hungry or thirsty, oppressed or forgotten.

When they suffer, you suffer.

We bring these places to you, and call out the names of countries especially on our hearts:

[space for congregation to call out names of countries in need]

Son of Man, come in glory!

Come King Jesus.

We bring our local area before your throne, King Jesus.

Many people are hungry and thirsty, struggling with basic necessities like clothes or housing.

Thank you for people and organisations who work for justice for these people.

When the least are blessed, you are blessed.

We bring these people and organisations to you, and call out their names before you:

[space for congregation to call out names of organisations]

Son of Man, come in glory!

Come King Jesus.

We bring the people on our hearts before your throne, King Jesus.

We pray for those in debt or in prison, those who are ill or who feel lonely and friendless.

When we feed, clothe, visit and invite them in, we serve you.

Speak to us about how we can make a difference, as we call out names of people in need.

[space for congregation to call out names of people in need]

Son of Man, come in glory!

Come King Jesus.

We bring our church before your throne, King Jesus.

Help us serve you as we serve the least.

May we see your face in the broken people of this world, and respond.

Lead us into our Advent journey, to know your rule and reign in our lives.

Son of Man, come in glory!

Come King Jesus. Amen.

LEADER: Advent crown, empty and dark, waits for the season to come.

Our empty hands, prepared to receive the gift of your will being done.

King Jesus, we open our hearts to you:

ALL: O come, O come Emmanuel.

Rule and reign in our lives today,

O come, O come Emmanuel.

Blessing

May we know the joy of the Lord in our life

In our hearts

In our homes

In our families

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.