

# Christ Church New Southgate & Friern Barnet

31st October 2021

## Call to worship

Let us write God's word onto our hearts  
as we share in worship together.

Let us listen to Scripture with the child Jesus  
and like him grow strong in wisdom.

## Song – Shine Jesus Shine

## A prayer of approach

God of love,  
you call us to come before with love in our hearts.  
We all have our own ideas and experiences of  
what love is.

From the human to the divine.

From the smallest flicker to the greatest flame.

We offer ourselves to you now, seeking to learn  
more

about the depth and breadth of your amazing  
love.

We need to know how to put that love into action,  
share that great warmth with our neighbour,  
every day of our lives.

Still us before you now and enable us to receive.

**Amen.**

Mark 12:28-34

New International Version - UK

## **The greatest commandment**

<sup>28</sup> One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, 'Of all the commandments, which is the most important?'

<sup>29</sup> 'The most important one,' answered Jesus, 'is this: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one."<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>30</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your

heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>31</sup> The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself."<sup>[c]</sup> There is no commandment greater than these.'

<sup>32</sup> 'Well said, teacher,' the man replied. 'You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. <sup>33</sup> To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.'

<sup>34</sup> When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

## Song – This little light of mine

Lord God, we confess that we struggle to love others.

Sometimes we don't even recognise who our neighbour is,  
never mind knowing how to love them.

**Encourage us in your ways, O Lord.**

We confess that we don't always realise that to show love to others,  
first we have to learn to love ourselves.

Sometimes we haven't a clue how to do that.

We may have an ideal in our head of what love is,  
then get cross with ourselves when we fall short.

**Encourage us in your ways, O Lord.**

We confess that we have the idea that love is this great dramatic gesture or action,  
when sometimes it can be as small as a touch of a fingertip.

**Encourage us in your ways, O Lord.**

**Amen.**

### **Assurance of forgiveness**

The God of all heaven and earth  
looks upon us now with love.

He wraps us tightly in his arms.

His love pardons us, enfolds us,  
emboldens us to accept that our sins are forgiven,  
and we can go into the world to reveal his love.

Praise be to God.

**Amen.**

*You know the way!* I silently reassured myself.  
Arms extended I bumped my way around the  
pitch black hotel room, trying to find the  
bathroom. I didn't want to turn on the light and  
wake up my husband. So I shuffled one foot in  
front of the other as I made my way to the other  
side of the room. *Almost there!* I felt the wall,  
rounded the corner, and went forward towards  
the bathroom.

*WHAM. Ouch!*

So, the door was not wide open as I had assumed.

Yes, I ran into the door! This is definitely not the  
most thrilling story, but Light is important—and it  
doesn't take a lot. In the dark hotel room, a little  
bitty night light would have made a huge  
difference and kept me from 1) a painful lump  
and 2) this embarrassing story!

Close your eyes for a moment... What would  
happen if we turn off all the lights in here?

Without light, we will be in darkness! And what  
happens when we are in the dark? In the dark:

- we will be stumbling and be lost

- there will be no colours or anything else to  
see

If you still have your eyes closed, you can open  
them now

Sometimes the phrase "in the dark" might be  
used to indicate that we are confused, don't  
understand, unclear. An example.

Someone tells a story. And at the end of the  
story everyone burst into uncontrolled laughter  
– everyone, that is, except you. For the life of  
you, you can't see what was so funny. You are  
confused. Why does everyone think the story  
to be so humorous? You are "in the dark" so to  
say, and it isn't until someone explains (or  
throws some light on) the punch line that you  
finally get it.

In the Bible, and in literature generally,  
darkness is associated with things that are evil  
and with death. Under the cover of darkness  
many crimes are committed.

Halloween is seen as a time when darkness is  
prevalent, with its link to pagan festivals,  
witches and wizards, skulls, etc

We think of many acts of cruelty and violence  
as coming from our dark side. Death is  
described as something dark and sinister.

It is always the bad guys in movies who wear  
black to symbolise their dark deeds (Darth  
Vadar in Star Wars or The dark land of Mordor  
in Lord of the Rings)

Darkness can also refer to people whose  
circumstances in life are anything but bright,  
positive and optimistic. This kind of darkness  
differs from one person to the next. The  
darkness may be poverty, hunger and  
homelessness.

It may be the hopelessness of a mother as she  
watches her child's life slowly fading away

because of a lack basic food, clean water and health care.

To a child in a war torn country, the darkness is armed men plundering, killing, raping. They are afraid that they will be abused, forced to join the ranks of the child soldiers, or be killed.

For another person darkness is struggling with an illness or mental health, the aches and pains of old age, losing the struggle with failing abilities and entering a nursing home. For some darkness is the inevitable day when they lose a loved one through death.

Whatever is your temptation – that is your darkness. Hatred. Greed. Not caring how your actions affect others. Alcohol abuse. Selfishness. All the things that Satan, the prince of darkness, brings into our lives.

Make no mistake there is darkness inside us. It is the darkness of sin.  
How does darkness manifest itself in your life?

What outward words and actions you know are not what God wants from his people, yet they keep on cropping up.

In fact, sometimes the darkness can become so thick that we have difficulty seeing the mess that sin has made of our lives. There are so many people in our community who live in darkness and don't even realise it.

Jesus said, **“I am the light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in the darkness”**(John 8:12). The prophecies of the Old Testament have been fulfilled. What an impact Christ the light has had on the darkness in our lives and in the world!

Jesus is the Light. This light exposes those dark private corners of our lives that we prefer to

keep hidden. Everything is not as neat and tidy as we thought. There is a mess that needs to be cleaned up, and even though we have tried to hide the mess in the darkest and most private corner of our lives, the light of Jesus has shown us that there is dirt piled up there that needs cleaning out.

- Our temptations and secret sins,
- those faults that we would prefer not to admit to,
- the poor way we have treated the people we love,
- the selfish attitude that we have nurtured,
- the times we have preferred to look the other way than offer a helping hand.

The Light, Jesus, has come into the world:

- not to bring condemnation, but to bring salvation,
- not to rub our noses in the dirt of those dark corners, but to sweep them out, to bring healing and reconciliation.

This light is freely yours.

Jesus is the real light, the genuine light who changes things.

- He is forgiveness.
- He is hope.
- He is encouragement.
- He is a word of love.
- He is strength.
- He is what you need to lighten your personal darkness.
- He is light to every person who has need of super-human strength to see through the darkness of trouble and sickness.
- He is the light who guides us along life's journey when we have more questions than we have answers.
- He is the light that dispels the darkness of

guilt with his forgiveness and the darkness of fear when we take our last breath. He is the light of life, eternal life.

In whatever way the darkness shows itself in our lives, Christ has come to be a light for us.

Wherever there is darkness in our family, in our friendships, in our community, Christ has come to shed light on all those areas of our lives to restore peace and harmony and joy.

Wherever there is darkness in our nation or in the world at large, Christ has commanded us to let our light shine before men, to use whatever means we have at our disposal to relieve the suffering of others and drive out the darkness that shrouds the lives of so many. We are to let the light of Christ shine through us so that the darkness of despair and hopelessness might be dispelled.

Darkness has filled the lives of so many, but it is now our job as those who have the light of Christ in our lives to let that light shine into the darkness to give hope, encouragement,. Jesus says to us, in Matthew 5:14-16 'You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>1</sup>Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

His love never changes.

In his light, we find the strength to carry on.

In his light, the darkness around us and in the lives of others is replaced with hope, love, and forgiveness.

It doesn't matter how small you feel your light is; it's important. You never know what your faithfulness, your availability, or your love could

do for another person.

Sometimes I think: *I don't matter. Why am I walking the narrow path? I'm just one person; can I really make a difference?*

Then I remember that a teeny weeny night light would have saved me from the unfortunate consequences of a bruised head. Similarly, my little light can make a huge difference in someone else's life.

We probably each know one person, who lights up our lives – that person who is always there to talk to, who does the small things, I remember when I was at Venture Scouts, in my early teens, one of the mothers of a leader. Her door was always open to us, I don't remember a single incident now, but I do remember that we were always welcome, for a drink and a chat.

It is easy to forget that if we love, with all our heart, soul mind and strength, that we can make a difference. A text or a phone call, a touch, a prayer,

Have you ever considered what a difference your life makes? You might not feel like you're doing anything exciting or noteworthy. You're not ending wars, discovering the cure for cancer, or ending world hunger, but your small bit still counts! Your little good deeds. Your faithfulness. Your devotion. They all work together to light the way to Christ's overwhelming love. Don't underestimate the power of your little light.

**Song My Lighthouse**

**Prayers of intercession**

Father God,

As the leaders of nations meet in Glasgow to agree goals to combat change, we pray that there

may be commitment by all countries to work together, and join forces with civil society, companies and people, on the frontline of climate change, to inspire and lead climate action. We pray that those who meet in Glasgow may have the wisdom and vision to treasure, protect and love the world which you created and which you entrusted to our care.

God of love,  
**may we love our world, each other and you.**

As Coronavirus cases continue to increase, and as many are concerned about the impact of the virus on their lives and their mental health, we pray that you will inspire the leaders of all nations to take appropriate actions to protect all people. We thank you for the vaccination programme, and we pray for all who are delivering the boosters, health professionals and volunteers alike. May research be accurate and helpful; may decisions be carefully thought out and wise; may the response be wholehearted. We pray for those whose mental health has been affected in any way; those suffering now with the virus; and those caring for them.

God of love,  
**may we love our world, each other and you.**

We pray for peace throughout the world. We remember especially the people of Sudan, where the Sovereign Council that was overseeing the transition to democracy has been dissolved and heavily armed soldiers deployed in the capital. We pray for Afghanistan where more than half the population – about 22.8 million people – face acute food insecurity, while over three million children under five could suffer acute malnutrition.

God of love,  
**may we love our world, each other and you.**

We pray for our church and for other churches and places of worship in our community. May we enable people to encounter God, work together to build community, serve those in need and share your love widely. Help us to build each other up as we seek to strengthen your kingdom among us.

God of love,  
**may we love our world, each other and you.**

We bring into your love all for whom we are especially concerned today, naming them in our hearts or picturing them in our minds. We pray for the sick and those who are worried, for the lonely and any who feel isolated, for the sorrowful and those who are recently bereaved, for ourselves, our families and friends.

God of love,  
**may we love our world, each other and you.**

Jesus said, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength; and you shall love your neighbour as yourself.'

God of love,  
**may we love our world, each other and you.**

In Jesus' name.

**Amen.**

**Song – Send us out**

Blessing

May the word of God dwell in our hearts,  
in our minds and in our actions,  
Let us be the Light of Jesus every day of our lives.  
And let us pray for one another, saying together:

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all, now, every day and evermore.  
Amen.**