

Sunday 3 May 2020, 11am

Christ Church New Southgate & Friern Barnet
christchurchnsfb.org

Reading: Philippians 2.1-11 (Good News) read by Sally

¹Your life in Christ makes you strong, and his love comforts you. You have fellowship with the Spirit, and you have kindness and compassion for one another. ²I urge you, then, to make me completely happy by having the same thoughts, sharing the same love, and being one in soul and mind. ³Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble toward one another, always considering others better than yourselves. ⁴And look out for one another's interests, not just for your own. ⁵The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had:

⁶He always had the nature of God,
but he did not think that by force he should try to remain equal with God.
⁷Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had,
and took the nature of a servant.
He became like a human being
and appeared in human likeness.
⁸He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death—
his death on the cross.
⁹For this reason God raised him to the highest place above
and gave him the name that is greater than any other name.
¹⁰And so, in honour of the name of Jesus
all beings in heaven, on earth, and in the world below
will fall on their knees,
¹¹and all will openly proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Sermon: Take a humble walk with God
Rev Ruth Moriarty

He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death – his death on a cross. Philippians 2.8

Captain Tom Moore has been made a colonel. His plan was simple – try to raise some money for the NHS by walking 100 laps of his patio before his

birthday. Who would have thought he might raise £32million? Who would have thought his sponsored walk might capture our nation?

There is one reason why veteran Tom has snuck into our hearts and it is this: he didn't have to walk.

Moore had fought for his country in his youth, lived well and now celebrating his 100th birthday, he didn't have to walk. He chose to walk. He chose to set himself a physical challenge I'm sure – don't we all hope to be that agile at a century old?! But he also chose to get involved in our common life, to engage with the world he shares with us, and not to keep shtum.

Likewise, Christ chose to come and walk on this earth and God chooses to walk with us today. In this second chapter of Philippians we have come across one of the most beautiful hymns of the early church. This first part of the chapter is a song, a song written by those who first believed in Jesus. It's a song that came from the heart, a song that was sung whenever Christians gathered together to encourage each other and to reaffirm their understanding of Jesus Christ life, death and resurrection.

The song begins confidently – Christ Jesus had the nature of God. What does that mean? Christ Jesus was part of creation, he lived in glory with God. We hear of his decision to come to earth from heaven, giving up his freewill and becoming like a man. A divine being choosing earth over heaven, choosing pain over comfort, choosing being with us not over us.

If a d list celebrity wants to say 'don't you know who I am' at club guest list, can you imagine how much of a struggle it must have been to choose to live on earth and not call 1000 angels to his side?

He chooses of course because he loves us, he loves us with an unending heart and as he has made each of us cannot fail to want to be with us, to care and to comfort us, to know our pain. He chooses to come to earth because he loves us.

Have you read Hilary Mantle's latest novel – the mirror and the light? I didn't realise online that it really is a bit of a whopper but Mantle's writing is extraordinary. She begins with the execution of Anne Boleyn and reminds us that as a queen she dies a noble and quick death.

The contrast couldn't be greater for Jesus. A Roman citizen would never have been crucified, it was understood as a criminal's death, for only the lowest of the low. It was understood from Jewish law that any person hung from a tree would be cursed, outside the law and so outside of God's presence. This kind of death is what Jesus walks to, carrying his cross. This is his humility. He chooses to come to us, he chooses to take on death for us, even that death on a cross.

We've thought a little about how this part of the Bible is a song. It started with incredible power chords and thousands of violins opening wide the heavens, as Christ walks in humility he walks down to earth, down to suffering, down to death and down, down, down into darkness. Here in the shadows of the underworld Christ lives for 3 days. Here he hears our pain, our fear, our worries, and our deepest sins. Here he sees our self-promoting nature, our power grabbing faults, our gossiping tongues and he weeps.

Who would choose to go there? The one who chooses to be humble. The king of kings dressed in a tunic and sandals, the king of kings walking dusty roads, raised as a refugee in poverty and obscurity, despised by those in authority, spat on and mocked, falsely accused and sentenced to death, this is our king of kings.

It's a funny kind of king isn't it? That's because his kingdom is not a castle, his kingdom is in our hearts. And his determination to be humble and obedient is what encourages us is it not? For that determination only comes from love. Love vast as the ocean, high as the mountains, so wide you can't get round it.

Have you felt low recently? Have you had dark days? Days where the numbers of deaths are too difficult to read, days where we consider when we will ever be able to move again. Here is space today for us to mourn this era, where so many have died and so many are still struggling.

The Philippian church struggled too, not with a virus but with a real challenge to their existence. Their struggle was one of unity. Imagine being part of that early church with one person saying: 'No, no, no, Jesus did it differently – I remember I was there.' While another replies: 'Oh, no he didn't – you weren't there, it was 8 fish and 3 loaves of bread.'

In fact, the church has always struggled to be unified, and now as a country we are unified in experience but not in beliefs about Brexit, politics, face masks... and so many things.

Paul's prayer is that the church in Philippi would be united in her attitude, that her attitude would be that of Christ's. His hope is that the church would walk humbly with her God.

In the Christian life we are called to walk. As Jesus begins his ministry, he calls his disciples to follow him on the way. As he walks around Galilee, a faith that walks is born. A faith that does not stay still but keeps going and walks on. For Christ's journey is not complete on the cross.

This song of Philippians 2 does not end here. This song has a chorus with a fanfare of trumpets to come. In Christ's humility he walks down to the lowest death, farthest away from God, and then, then he is raised up. Then his name is the name above every other name. Then he is raised to be with God again in glory.

Colonel Tom Moore's birthday has been celebrated by many artists – Adam Salisbury painted a portrait of him with the quote 'heroes don't fly, they walk' on it. Where are you choosing to walk to in lockdown? Have you done 100 laps of the park? Where did you last walk to? What was it like? What have you seen or heard while walking?

Walking is a beautiful way to travel, it's free, it's straightforward, most of us can do it and it's a joy even round here in London at the moment. As we have humbled our expectations of life over this period, as we take just 1 walk a day, may we reflect on Christ's humility.

He walked with purpose; he chose to walk with us. He walked just as we walk, one foot in front of the other. May our faith be likewise, even when we don't like the look of the road ahead, may we be confident in the God who calls us to walk with him for he loves us and chooses to walk with us. May our walk be steady and strong, may we be united in humility. May we walk humbly with our God.

Blessing

**May we walk joyfully with Jesus today,
May we walk closely with his Spirit,
May we walk humbly with our God. Amen**