

Christ Church New Southgate & Friern Barnet

5 February 2023

Welcome

Song: All creatures of our God and king,
lift up your voice and with us sing

Alleluia, alleluia!

Bright burning sun with golden beam,
soft shining moon with silver gleam,

O praise him, O praise him,

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Swift rushing wind so wild and strong,
white clouds that sail in heaven along,

O praise him, alleluia!

New rising dawn in praise rejoice,
you lights of evening find a voice;

O praise him ...

People and nations, take your part,
love and forgive with all your heart;

Alleluia, alleluia!

All who long pain and sorrow bear,
trust God and cast on him your care;

O praise him ...

O praise him ...

Reading: Isaiah 58.1-9

³The people ask, "Why should we fast if the Lord never notices? Why should we go without food if he pays no attention?"

The Lord says to them, "The truth is that at the same time you fast, you pursue your own interests and oppress your workers. ⁴Your fasting makes you violent, and you quarrel and fight. Do you think this kind of fasting

will make me listen to your prayers? ⁵When you fast, you make yourselves suffer; you bow your heads low like a blade of grass and spread out sackcloth and ashes to lie on. Is that what you call fasting? Do you think I will be pleased with that?

⁶"The kind of fasting I want is this: Remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free. ⁷Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear, and do not refuse to help your own relatives.

⁸"Then my favour will shine on you like the morning sun, and your wounds will be quickly healed. I will always be with you to save you; my presence will protect you on every side. ⁹When you pray, I will answer you. When you call to me, I will respond.

Song: Build Your kingdom here

Let the darkness fear

Show Your mighty hand

Heal our streets and land

Set Your church on fire

Win this nation back

Change the atmosphere

Build Your kingdom here

We pray

Come set Your rule and reign

In our hearts again

Increase in us we pray

Unveil why we're made

Come set our hearts ablaze with hope

Like wildfire in our very souls

Holy Spirit, come invade us now

We are Your Church

And we need Your power

In us

We seek Your kingdom first

We hunger and we thirst

Refuse to waste our lives

For You're our joy and prize

To see the captive hearts released

The hurt, the sick, the poor at peace

We lay down our lives for Heaven's cause
We are Your church
And we pray revive
This earth (we're prayin' for revival)

Reading: Matthew 5.13-20

¹³ “You are like salt for the whole human race. But if salt loses its saltiness, there is no way to make it salty again. It has become worthless, so it is thrown out and people trample on it.

¹⁴ “You are like light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead it is put on the lampstand, where it gives light for everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven.

Teaching about the Law

¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to do away with the Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets. I have not come to do away with them, but to make their teachings come true. ¹⁸ Remember that as long as heaven and earth last, not the least point nor the smallest detail of the Law will be done away with—not until the end of all things.^[a] ¹⁹ So then, whoever disobeys even the least important of the commandments and teaches others to do the same, will be least in the Kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, whoever obeys the Law and teaches others to do the same, will be great in the Kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ I tell you, then, that you will be able to enter the Kingdom of heaven only if you are more faithful than the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees in doing what God requires.

Song: This little light of mine
I'm going to let it shine
Oh, this little light of mine
I'm going to let it shine

This little light of mine
I'm going to let it shine
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine

All around the neighborhood
I'm going to let it shine
All around the neighborhood
I'm going to let it shine
All around the neighborhood

Welcoming Rebecca Feo as Deacon

Rebecca, do you believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and do you believe Jesus Christ is your saviour and Lord? I do

Do you believe that God has called you through his church to be a deacon and do you promise relying on God's grace to be faithful to this ministry? I do

Do you members of this church, confirm the call of God to Rebecca as deacon in the service of Jesus Christ?

We do.

**The Lord bless you and keep you
The Lord make his face to shine upon you
And be gracious to you;
The Lord turn his face towards you and
give you peace**

Sermon: God calls us to be distinctively Christian

We're big fans of online food shopping, quick, delivered to the door and you can budget easily. However, there is the issue of substitution. If a product you have picked is not in stock, another product will be chosen for you. Say you order a loaf of bread, if the exact brand of bread you picked is not available, they will send another type of bread. You don't have to accept the substitution; you can send it back and get a refund.

As two of our family cannot eat gluten, substitutes often cause a problem. One pack of crisps can be gluten free while the next is not. It is no use to us to have crisps full of gluten, they are worthless to us. They always get sent back. In Matthew 5, we hear Jesus calling the crowd listening to sermon of the mount, to be distinctive, be salty. In fact if you're not distinctive in your faith, then it isn't following God. The call of Christ is for us to be distinctive in what we value – blessed are the poor in spirit, who we support – blessed are those who mourn and for us to be distinctive in our character – blessed are the humble. All these people will be part of the Kingdom of Heaven. All these people will know the power and presence of the Spirit. In the UK we might say a person is 'salt of the earth' meaning, they are a good person. The suggestion from the text is more that Christians are to be the flavour, zest and distinctive taste of the world. Christians are to be a fiery scotch bonnet of flavour when it comes to helping the weak find strength, seeking justice for the oppressed and freedom for prisoners. A Christian should be different to the world, be distinctive in what we say and do.

Jesus also said we should be seen differently, like a light for the world. A lamp on its stand. Take a look at this picture please. Here we see an enormous crowd of people each carrying a small light. This image helps to understand the power of lots of small lights, for Jesus does not expect us to be one light in a sea of darkness, he expects the crowd listening each to be lights. When he says – you are like salt, you are like light, he is saying all of you are like salt, all of you are like light. A city is not made of one light, it is made of many. It is hard to be distinctive at work, at home, in the community if you are alone. But none of us are alone are we? Here in this place, right now, and those who watch online now or later are all part of our church and are all trying to be distinctive – to be salty; to be light in the world. Our light shines together for God's glory.

It's very easy to treat this part of Matthews gospel 5.13-16 as separate from 17-20. And yet

they are connected. Jesus calls his listeners to be distinctive, to be salty, to be filled with light, to stand together in this distinctive way of life. But then he reminds them of a relationship of the law – the first 5 books of the bible and the prophets and him. Jesus connects the Old and New Testament, and we must do too. Let's think about the Isaiah reading, from chapter 58. Isaiah is correcting the people of God who have ended up trying to please God by being distinctive in very particular ways. In the text Isaiah is criticising the way people were fasting – with ash and sackcloth for their own personal spiritual benefit. All the while ignoring suffering, injustice and chaos all around them. Isaiah says look up! Don't substitute fasting for closeness to God, be close to him by serving the world.

The best online food shop substitution I have ever had was for 12 chicken legs. But the shop didn't have the 12-chicken leg pack in stock. So, I was sent mixed packs with 4 thighs and 2 legs in each box. But as I had originally ordered 12 chicken legs, I ended up with 24 chicken thighs and 12 legs and a voucher for £20 off my next shop. We ate a lot of chicken that month. But the AI recommendation of sending so much chicken, just I got the legs missed the point. All I wanted was chicken. I wasn't that bothered about it being legs, I just wanted chicken for dinner.

Our first reading from Isaiah reminds us of the danger of getting hung up on details that we miss the big picture. Isaiah records that the people were so keen on fasting, so devoted to it, that they forgot what it was supposed to be for. Fasting to give glory to God - yes, fasting to give others food instead – yes, fasting in very particular way as a personal spiritual discipline because you think that's what will keep you in God's good book – no.

God calls us too through the words of Isaiah to not get caught up in details so much that we miss the bigger questions of life. God reminds us not to substitute a distinctive practice for faith itself. God pleads for us to look for the bigger picture and not get stuck on details.

Maybe we think church can only be at 11am at Christ Church. Maybe we think we can only use the Good News Bible, maybe we think communion should only be served as small cubes of bread. Maybe we think being distinctively Christian is not swearing – which is a good idea by the way, maybe we think being distinctively Christian is wearing a cross, or maybe we think being distinctively Christian is praying and reading the bible for 15 mins a day. All of those things are good, all of those things are things that Christians can do and can honour God through them. But we cannot, we must not miss the big picture that following Jesus, being a Christian is about a distinctive attitude. It is how we are and how we are seen.

A city on a hill cannot be hidden, and nor could the light of the world dying on a hill be hidden for his attitude was distinctive. He was not angry or bitter, he was obedient. He was full of grace and mercy for which there are no substitutes. May our little lights shine to show all the light of the world: Jesus and to glorify him.

Song: King of kings, Majesty
God of Heaven living in me
Gentle Saviour, closest friend
Strong Deliverer, beginning and end
All within me falls at Your throne

Your Majesty, I can but bow
I lay my all before You now
In royal robes I don't deserve
I live to serve Your Majesty

Earth and Heaven worship You
Love eternal, Faithful and True
Who bought the nations, ransomed souls
Brought this sinner near to Your throne
All within me cries out in praise.

Your majesty, I can but bow
I lay my all before You now
In royal robes I don't deserve
I live to serve Your Majesty
Your majesty, I can but bow
I lay my all before You now

In royal robes I don't deserve
I live to serve Your Majesty

Communion

1 Come to God's table, for all is prepared,
the bread that we offer is broken and shared,
Christ's presence among us is food for the
soul,
reviving, renewing, and making us whole.

2 Come to God's table, and drink of the wine,
the blood of the Saviour, in mystery divine,
the cup of salvation both priceless and free,
transforming God's people to all we can be.

3 Come to God's table, we come as we are,
we bring all the burdens we've carried so far,
in body, in spirit, in soul, mind and heart,
to feed on the grace only God can impart.

4 Come to God's table! then go in God's
grace
to hold all the earth in a heav'nly embrace,
sent out in the Spirit to tend and to care
in thought, word and action, our life is our
prayer.

*Come to the table,
come to the table,
come to the table of God.*

Prayers for the world

Song: Hear the call of the kingdom, lift your
eyes to the King,
Let His song rise within you as a fragrant
offering,
Of how God, rich in mercy, came in Christ to
redeem
All who trust in His unfailing grace.

Hear the call of the Kingdom to be children
of light,
With the mercy of heaven, the humility of
Christ.
Walking justly before Him, loving all that is
right
That the life of Christ may shine through
Him.

King of Heaven, we will answer the call,
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,
Filled with passion, filled with power to
proclaim
Salvation in Jesus' name.

Hear the call of the Kingdom to reach out to
the lost,
With the Father's compassion in the wonder
of the cross,
Bringing peace and forgiveness, and a hope
yet to come;
Let the nations put their trust in Him.

Blessing