

Sermon: Be obedient to Christ, Philippians 2.12-18
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I know I don't need to tell you that Jesus is the son of God.

I know I don't need to tell you that he chose to come to the earth.

I know I don't need to tell you that he came to serve not to be served.

You know that he was humble

You know that he walked the path of obedience

You know that he died on the cross

And I hope you know that he rose again

That through his death, all of us can be free.

But do we know how to be obedient?

Do we know – dear friends – how to be obedient to God?

This past week has been tough. Tough on all of us. Lockdown is getting to us, we're fed up of watching TV, fed up of seeing the same 4 walls, fed up of everything being hard and difficult. Some of us are grieving, some of us are mourning, all of us are aching for the new normal to come.

This week the death of George Floyd has exposed deep divides that exist in our world. Our world where we know that black men get treated differently to white men, where Covid 19 affects those from a black and minority ethnic background more, and where racism is alive and well.

This week we have struggled to know what to say, struggled to know how to express our fears, anger and concerns. You might even not know what to pray. We are reminded especially this week that we live in a world that is full of corrupt and sinful people.

The church at Philippi were a church that needed encouragement, a bit like us at the moment. They were a church that was a good church, a bit like us too. They were a

church who knew God, knew Christ and had always sought to be obedient to him. They were a church facing exactly the same questions Christians face today: how can we be good news now?

Here it is plain and simple – let us be obedient to Christ. The Christ who put off glory to come to us, who walked where we walk, who suffered, who died. The Christ who brings good news to the poor, proclaims liberty to captives and frees the oppressed. The Christ who lifted up the rejected, ate with sinners and delighted to be with the downtrodden.

There is plenty we need to learn; plenty we need to hear and more than plenty we all need to listen to. But before all of that Christ Church, we must have the same attitude as Christ, we must be obedient just as he was to be humble and obedient.

One huge benefit of lockdown is that nature has come to life, we hear the birdsong, we delight in beautiful spring growth and with less pollution we can finally see the stars – even here in N11. In this part of the bible, Paul is calling us to shine, shine like the stars above us. So who wants to be a shiny star?! We delight in stars don't we. They are beautiful, but we have made them cute, haven't we?

I'm guilty of saying – ah you're a superstar - to someone bringing me a cup of tea. Whereas the reality of a star is not so cute, it's a burning ball of fire and gas that is so hot way up there in the sky that we can see it all the way from down here. Our obedience to Christ is not like a child being obedient to a parent, it's not like an adult following the highway code it's a burning brightness that guides and leads and that has cosmic significance.

Our obedience to God is not simple, the call of obedience is a call to the way of Christ that fully and utterly engages with the pain and suffering of the world so that we can say – Jesus is Lord and know what that

means! That despite all that is wrong, all that is not fixed despite so much hard work, legislation, policies, changes of governments, that God still loves us.

God still sends his son to us, for everyday that we choose to be obedient to the way of Christ – his light shines. His light to lead and to guide. This is the work of a Christian. The gift that God has given to each of us, needs to be activated. It needs to be used, so that the gift of life that he has given is shared.

Christ Church do not be discouraged this week. Life is not easy at the moment, but in our unease, in our worries, in our fears God calls us, just Paul calls us to be obedient to Christ for when we are – we burn brightly with his light and hope and we find joy and peace.

The task facing all of us is to take the example of Christ and to work that out for ourselves. How can we be like him today? How can we be Christ in the face of racism? How can we be like Christ when we don't know how to change systemic issues that are affecting 1000s of people in our country and all around the world.

This task however is one for each of us in our own spheres of influence. This task is for each us, and for all of us. There will be times when as individuals we find it impossible to praise God, then the rest of the church will carry us. There will be times when each of us in our families and households, we find it difficult to pray, and the rest of the church will carry us.

There will be times when we have no words, when we can't breathe, and the spirit will unite us and carry us. At these times is when Christ's light shines in the darkness, even though the darkness exists - it cannot put it out.

I think for each of us we need to work out how can we shine? How can we make a difference? How can we be God's good

news where we are? Can each of us call out racism where we see it, can we encourage those who are incredibly lonely in lockdown, can we bring truth and light and shine in new and different ways? Each of us as individuals can answer that. And as a church too – how can we shine in the light? How can we make a difference? How can we stand together to shine brightly for Christ?

The first part of that is about a commitment to being obedient, being obedient to that beautiful vision of Christ in Philippians 2, that hymn of faith that Christ came to us to serve others. That is our attitude. We must then work that out in our lives. We cannot afford to be obedient and then not do anything different in our lives. If we call ourselves Christians, we must work out how to be obedient in these difficult times. We must work it out because that gift of faith is given to us. It is then our responsibility to work it out in our situation today.

Hear afresh Christ Church – be obedient to Christ and so in that obedience know his joy as you burn brightly for him and his glory alone. Amen.