

Welcome and Notices

Continue to pray for Mary and her family as they come to terms with the loss of husband Alan.

News from Immanuel - Jenny Powley's husband Philip died on 2 May.

Birthdays:

James Gough turns 12 on Wednesday

Call to worship

The Father loves you

The Son loves you

The Spirit loves you

Come and show your love

Praise: Great is thy faithfulness

Great is Thy faithfulness

O God my Father

There is no shadow of turning with Thee

Thou changest not

Thy compassions they fail not

As Thou hast been

Thou forever will be

Great is Thy faithfulness

Great is Thy faithfulness

Morning by morning new mercies I see

And all I have needed Thy hand hath provided

Great is Thy faithfulness

Lord unto me

Pardon for sin

And a peace that endureth

Thine own dear presence to cheer

And to guide

Strength for today

and bright hope for tomorrow

Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside

All Age talk

- What comes first, the chicken or the egg? These days, there may be a scientific answer to the question, but it is one illustration of things that seem to move in circles.
- What about this one: Which comes first in practice, loving God or putting that love into practice? In this week's reading, Jesus says: 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments' – which makes it sound as if it is loving God (in Jesus) that comes first.
- Many would say, from personal experience, that it works the other way round, too. When we do practical caring loving things, and see the consequences – both for

others and for ourselves – we find ourselves drawn closer to the heart of God (in Jesus).

- Jesus' presence inspires us to love our neighbours. Putting love in action helps us to see Jesus. We can't do things in our community in the way we used to.
- But I have heard of and seen lots of ways in which people in the church have shown huge amounts of love for one another.
I was struck by what the Queen had to say in her VE celebration day speech – "Our streets are not empty, they are filled with the love and the care that we have for each other."
- Thank you all for doing what you are doing to show Jesus' love.

Offering Prayer

Video: Rachel has a lovely idea of something we can all do this week to show Jesus love to family and friends.

Praise: We rejoice in your goodness Lord

Prayer

How can we ever understand the mystery of Your love, O God? How can we ever estimate

the value of Your compassion and mercy?

In our weaknesses and brokennesses,

in our strengths and wholenesses,

we find the touch of Your support and creative energy.

In our fears and suffering, in our joys and pleasures,

we find the moistness of Your tears

and the percussion of Your laughter.

In our failures and despair, in our successes and dreams,

we find the comfort of Your forgiveness

and the inspiration of Your Spirit.

These are gifts beyond measure,

and we can only respond with joyful praise.

You are the home we long for,

the family where we discover that we truly belong the hearth where we are warmed and renewed

And we worship You with our whole being, wonderful and loving God.

Lord's Prayer

Praise: How deep the Father's love for us

How deep the Father's love for us

How vast beyond all measure

That He should give His only Son

To make a wretch His treasure

How great the pain of searing loss
The Father turns His face away
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory
Behold the man upon a cross
My sin upon His shoulders
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers
It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished
His dying breath has brought me life
I know that it is finished
I will not boast in anything
No gifts, no power, no wisdom
But I will boast in Jesus Christ
His death and resurrection
Why should I gain from His reward?
I cannot give an answer
But this I know with all my heart
His wounds have paid my ransom

Reading: John 14:15 – 21

¹⁵ “If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be ¹⁸ in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

Sermon: “Are we done yet?”

A youngster came home from Sunday school and was asked by his mum what he had learnt that morning. “Well” he said, we were told about how God sent Moses behind the enemy lines to rescue the Israelites from the Egyptians. He brought them to the Red Sea, and then Moses ordered his engineers to build a pontoon bridge. After they had all crossed over, they looked back and saw the Egyptian tanks coming.

Quick as a flash Moses grabbed his walkie-talkie and asked the Air Force to send bombers to blow up the bridge and save the Israelites.” His mother smiled at him and said, “Are you sure that’s the way she told the story?” “Well, not exactly. But if I told it the way she did, you’d never believe it!”

One of the most embarrassing things for parents of little ones in church is when they come out with statements that can sometimes be quite inappropriate! A young mum who had been attending worship for a few months always used to bring her little boy

along with her. On that particular Sunday they had arrived in good time, and everything seemed to be going really smoothly when just after the children's talk he piped up, "Are we done yet?"

Our gospel reading is a part of Jesus' lengthy conversation in the Upper Room after the Last Supper. It starts right after Judas leaves to go to the temple to betray Jesus and continues for four chapters. And, the bottom line is that the disciples are trying to figure out, "Are we done?"

"Is it all over?" "What happens next?" "What about us?" And Jesus is trying to give them a "Yes," but also "No" answer, which they really don't understand.

The "Yes" part of the answer is that he is indeed leaving, it is indeed over. Jesus tries to get them to understand exactly what the next three days will be about: death, hell, resurrection, time spent with the disciples, then Ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Frankly, it's all just too weird and confusing and frightening, and they don't really get it. "Where are you going?" "No, we can't come if we don't know the way?" "Why don't you speak plainly?" they asked him. Why are you leaving, now, so soon? And Jesus' answer probably confused them even more - Yes . . . and No.

Yes, in that the way it had been for the last few years – well that chapter was over. That close, intimate, personal relationship between himself and his disciples was over and could never be repeated.

But, **no**, in that the community of love they had started together was not over. And it would never be over. It had begun in us and would continue forever.

Because, when I leave, said Jesus, I will send into your midst the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth, to hold you together and to lead you forward. So, no, it isn't over. We aren't done yet.

In reality, in the words of that lovely Carpenters song, "We've only just begun...." And the mark of this ongoing Jesus Movement/Christ Community is love. Which is easy to say but oh so hard to do.

GK Chesterton is reported to have once said, "In one place in the Bible, Jesus commands us to love our neighbours. In another place he tells us to love our enemies. This is because, generally speaking, they are the same people."

Love is hard, particularly the sort of love Jesus is talking about here, agape, self-giving, sacrificial love which seeks nothing for itself but instead seeks only to aid and help the other. Love is hard; especially when we are invited by Jesus to love people we don't really like.

And of course, this is not the only place Jesus calls upon us to love each other in this way. The text says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." And what are Jesus' commandments?

Well didn't he say they were all about loving God and each other? "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind; and the second is like unto it – you shall love your neighbour as yourself." In another place he says: "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

In the 21st chapter of John, just after his resurrection, Jesus has this amazing conversation with Peter on the beach: "Peter, do you love me? Feed my lambs." "Peter, do you love me, tend my sheep." "Peter, do you love me? Feed my sheep."

The problem is, loving each other is very hard business. Loving people you like is difficult enough; how can Jesus' order us, command us, to love even those we don't like? What are we to do? How do we begin to love others in the way our Lord loved us?

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments." It is a part of our basic human nature that we hear these words as law, as a rule, as a command to be obeyed, as a work to be achieved. Our ears hear Jesus saying something he didn't say. We hear: "If you want to prove to the world and to God that you love me, then you will have to show it by loving one another." That's what we hear; but that's not what Jesus said. Jesus gave us a word of gospel, not law; a word of promise, not judgment.

Let's listen again: If you love me, you will keep my commandments. If you are a child of God, you will act like one. If you are connected to the Christ, you will bear the Christian fruit of love.

Jesus' point is that the capacity to love people is not something we develop or achieve; it is rather the gift of God received in our relationship of love with the Christ. "If you love me you will keep my commandments," is a gospel promise that being in relationship with the living Lord is a life changing, transforming experience.

As Christ begins to live more and more within us, as we open our lives more and more to Christ's leading, we find ourselves more and more able to treat others in a loving and respectful manner.

The loving relationship we have with Christ begins to spill over into loving relationships with those around us. And, Jesus implies, though I am leaving, the love community we have created will continue to live and grow into the future.

The concept of living in community is being tested now more than ever before. The challenge we have as God's people is to continue being community, using very different tools – the telephone, the computer, and perhaps our oven!

Chats over the phone, using Zoom to see and talk to each other, and perhaps baking a cake for someone, are all things we are able to do because we care, because nothing, not even this virus, can break the bonds of the community we share in Jesus.

Jesus assures us today that in the midst of life's surprising twists and turns; he will never be done with loving us. Our calling today is to respond to that promise and that love by continuing to one another. And that is a calling with which we are never done.

Prayers of Intercession:

Dear Lord, we bring into your love
those who do not know you and your love;
those who have turned away from you;
those who struggle to accept you;
those who refuse to listen.
May your love touch them,
and transform their lives.

Dear Lord, we bring into your love
those who need parental love;
those who are alone;
those who are abused;
those who are neglected.
May your love touch them,
and transform their lives.

Dear Lord, we bring into your love
those who seek the truth;
those who work in the justice system;
those who campaign and advocate on behalf of the voiceless.
May your love touch them,
and transform their lives.

May we show the power and presence of your love in our church,
our community and our world – for Jesus' sake.
Amen.

Sending our Prayer:

Go in peace to live in love,
to show God's love,
to receive God's love
– everywhere, and at all times.

Amen.

Praise: Love divine
Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven to earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble dwelling,
All thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit
Into every troubled breast,
Let us all in thee inherit,
Let us find that second rest.
Take away the love of sinning,
Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith, as its beginning,
Sets our hearts at liberty.

Come almighty to deliver,
Let us all thy life receive;
Suddenly return and never,
Never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve thee as thy hosts above,
Pray, and praise thee without ceasing,
Glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in thee;
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder, love and Praise.