

A&S Kirkgate Parish Church
Sunday 17th May 2020 (Still in Lock-Down)
Reflections by your locum Brian Murray

Hello and a very warm welcome to you if you once more if you have been listening in or this is your first time, and now you can listen on the phone line so 'hi' to you on the phone call. Please tell those who don't have the internet the number to call at a local rate it is 01294 444201. I know some are already listening in this way and hello to you, it's so good that you can still be part of the service.

I hope you will be blessed with our wee recording until we can get back into the hall together, however that will look. No hugs, no handshakes, no tea and coffee, goodness knows what else, but God is good and He is doing a special thing for us all I'm sure.

Thank you once more to Stuart for these uplifting recordings he is adding to make this experience, hopefully, a joy to listen to.

Also Kirkgate folks are already tuning in to West Kilbride Parish Church and finding a good quality streamed service on a Sunday morning and evening with more contemporary songs and recordings.

Now what I want to focus on today is this aspect of love for Christ, love for God and love for each other, how they are linked and how they produce the environment in which we are called to be obedient to Jesus words. You see the teachings and commands of Jesus are manifest in our love of each other and the love we share with Him.

This love I'm talking about is not born of sentimentalism or physical attraction, but of charitable status, deep seated heart felt relational love that Jesus calls us to have for Him over and above even our families, our children even.

A love that is platonic and sacrificial. A love that is based on relationship flowing seamlessly into action.

If you love me, you will obey my commands, John 14 verse 1

and John 14 verse 23 "Jesus replied, 'Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.'"

As always let us calm our hearts and minds for a few beats of the heart before we begin our worship and contemplate God's word.

Our call to worship comes from Psalm 66 verses 16-20
Let us hear the word of the Lord.

16 Come and hear, all you who fear God;
let me tell you what he has done for me.

17 I cried out to him with my mouth;
his praise was on my tongue.

18 If I had cherished sin in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened;

19 but God has surely listened
and has heard my prayer.

20 Praise be to God,
who has not rejected my prayer
or withheld his love from me!

CH4 220 The Day thou gave us Lord has ended - (no verse 2 in the recording and the words are slightly modernised in the CH4 but try and follow on and sing out for your neighbours in the street)

1. The day you gave us, Lord, has ended ;
the darkness falls at your behest ;
to you our morning hymns ascended,
your praise shall sanctify our rest.

3. As o'er each continent and island
the dawn leads on another day,
the voice of prayer is never silent,
nor dies the song of praise away.

4. The sun that bids us rest is waking
your children 'neath the western sky,
and hour by hour fresh lips are making
your wondrous deeds resound on high.

5. So be it, Lord ! your throne shall never,
like earth's proud empires, pass away ;
your Kingdom stands and grows for ever,
till all your creatures own your sway.

Shall we join our hearts and minds in prayer let us pray.

Eternal and ever-blessed God,

we give You thanks

for the joy that comes

when we gather to here this worship time together on the computer, mobile or phone that keeps us

truly united as the people of God.

We thank You for the family of faith,

united in our desire to follow Jesus.

Thank You for those with whom we have laughed. who have made this world a more cheery place. Thank You for those with whom we have wept

and we have shared our sorrows

in our times of need.

Thank You for those with whom we worship together, for those with whom we pray together,

for those in whose company

we have listened to Your voice

and sought to see You face to face.

Forgive us for everything that has interrupted the companionship we should enjoy:

for selfishness that made us want nothing

but our own way,

for intolerance which made us see nothing

but our own point of view,

for self-assertiveness that made us seek to impose our own will upon others.

Have mercy, good Lord.

Forgive us for arguments in which we lost our temper, for discussions in which bitter words

and sarcastic comments were thrown about,

for things we said in the heat of the moment

and now bitterly regret. Have mercy, good Lord.

So cleanse and purify us, that in the days to come we will work to live in unity with one another because we are one in Christ.

Hear this our prayer

through Jesus Christ our Lord who taught us to pray the Lord's prayer when we say together:

Our Father, Who art in Heaven

Hallowed be Thy name,

Thy Kingdom come

Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven

Give us this day our daily bread

and forgive us our debts

as we forgive our debtors
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil
For Thine is the Kingdom the power and the glory
Forever,
Amen

[Our bible reading today continues in John 14 verses 15-31, More of Jesus Farewell Discourse. Taken from the NIV translation. \(Deirdre Reading\)](#)

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 in you. 18 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 realise 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.” 22 Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?” 23 Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24 Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. 25 “All this I have spoken while still with you. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. 28 “You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. 29 I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. 30 I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is

coming. He has no hold over me, 31 but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me.

“Come now; let us leave.

Amen.

Let us sing once more

CH4 644 O Jesus I have promised

O Jesus, I have promised
to serve you to the end ;
be now and always near me,
my master and my friend :
I shall not fear the battle
if you are by my side,
nor wander from the pathway
if you will be my guide.

Oh, let me feel you near me :
the world is ever near ;
I see the sights that dazzle,
the tempting sounds I hear ;
my foes are ever near me,
around me, and within ;
but, Jesus, draw still nearer,
and shield my soul from sin.

Oh, let me hear you speaking
in accents clear and still,
above the storms of passion,
the murmurs of self-will ;
Oh, speak to reassure me,
to hasten or control ;
O speak, and make me listen,
true guardian of my soul.

O Jesus, you have promised
to all who follow you,
that where you are in glory

your servant shall be too ;
and, Jesus, I have promised
to serve you to the end :
now give me grace to follow,
my master and my friend.

My Reflection today is entitled - Love and Obedience.

We are following on as I said from last week in John's Gospel Chapter 14. If you have your Bibles to hand then please turn to these verses.

Chapters 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 are commonly known as the farewell discourse. - The final instructions given to a dispirited bunch of disciples coming to terms with what Jesus has been telling them all along that the cross is looming before them and that one of them will betray Him. Can they understand that the cross looms because God loves them? A theology missed by so much of our world then and today? A blind world Jesus talks of in this passage who cannot hear the Gospel.

Jesus makes it plain here in black and white. There is no in between. If we love Christ the way we should then we will feel compelled to love those around us.

Matthew 22 (also in Luke 14)

Jesus declared, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (NIV)

The words of Jesus strengthens our relationship with Him as we follow all His teaching and all the good words in the Bible.

How do we love Jesus and where do we find the strength to love in the way He calls us to?

Our passage today opens with a very small but significant word. 'IF'. That is an all important word for it is a leading word. It is a word that can lead to different paths. If you do this then something will happen or not as the case may be.

I suppose many of us will remember mum or dad encouraging us with a choice. Quite often we would simply be told to go and do something. Get it done now, for in that command there was a unspoken consequence if we didn't.

But an IF, is a word that allows freedom to choose between reward or curse. If you go and tidy your room you will gain a reward and conversely if you don't

go and tidy your room there will be no reward and might very well be sanctions.

Jesus will never force His love on us, but it is there for all who seek Him. The choice to love Him and thus love God is very dependant on our part for God first loved us, whether we deserved it or not.

1 John 4:19

We love because he (God) first loved us.

So much so that He sent Jesus into the world to teach us a new life giving way to harmonise as a community and to focus our lives in a Spiritual way on God the creator.

To lay down our lives of sin by accepting the grace by which Jesus went to the cross for love of us, rose again to show us He is life and ascended that we might continue in our belief and be aided through life by His Spirit until we can meet Him in Heaven.

If you love me, suggests there is an alternative. That we need not love Jesus and can reject the Father and Son and treasure other worldly things above our love of Him.

Firstly we love Jesus then His outpouring of love for us has an overflow that results in obedience.

Not just 'be obedient to my teaching' and go on doing other things as well that are not my teaching and think about loving me later.

Love comes first for without it we are not compelled to sacrifice for Him and others as Christ Jesus does for us. If you love me, comes first!

Jesus shows us that love. He had such empathy with His disciples in that upper room that He told them

John 14 verses 1-6

"Do not let your hearts be troubled...believe in me...I am the way and the truth and the life"

They knew Jesus as a real physical man standing before them. They could love Him as a brother in the physical, but how will they be able to show that love when He is gone from the sight?

So what commands is Jesus asking us to be obeisant to? Firstly we have established we must love Him for that love is conditional and reciprocal. We do not love God if we do not love the Son, we do not love the Son if we do not love each other.

Jesus teaching isn't about a list of rules. That is the way the Pharisees would try and live. That is the way of legalism and disappointment in ourselves and everyone else when we judge against a set of laws. That was the purpose of the law to highlight humanities failings, but Jesus love rises above that to show us a higher way to live. My yoke is light Jesus tells us. It shouldn't be so hard.

Mathew 11 verse 29, you know - come to me all who are heavily burdened - that part?

So it is not a load of moral rules that the scribes would make up that we should aspire to. Jesus started His teaching ministry as John the Baptist had before Him. Repent or turn from sinful ways and believe on the Son and receive the gift of the Spirit in Baptism and the promise of everlasting life. Come into the loving fold, where we are to love God and to love our neighbour.

All other commandments gather behind these two. Especially here Jesus asks us to love each other, for in that way we create a harmonious unified family - we live by His teaching in sacrificial 'agape' love and we grow the church community and the Kingdom here on earth as we obediently follow all of Jesus words we are given in our Bibles.

He repeats that command over and over. In Chapter 13, verse 34 and 35 Jesus had just washed the disciples feet, Judas had left to betray Him and He said,

"A new command I give to you: Love one another. As I have have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

and in Chapter 15 as He talked of the branches and the vine, verse 12.

"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this , that he lay down his life for his friends."

And the result of this command.

Chapter 15 verse 11.

"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."

Jesus words are special for in our passage Chapter 14 verse 24 Jesus says, **"These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me."**

What joy an encouragement we feel when we help others with food clothing and shelter and speak of God and witness of our faith.

Are we as concerned for the person we love's soul as we are their physical and mental well being? What is more important, short time comfort or eternal life of peace and freedom from pain and suffering with Jesus in Heaven? Of course we can have both, but being obedient to Jesus is more about the spiritual well being of humanity than their temporal needs. Our love of each other might have a mantra that reads Mathew 6 verse 33, Jesus said,

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

But therein lies a challenge as well. Some might just want a cosy loving relationship with Christ. He is my friend and saviour, who I keep for a rainy day. Or my love for Jesus runs deep and I keep Him to myself. There is much much more to experience with Jesus leading us out of that comfort zone into a world of wonder and opportunity.

Yet when we fail Him, He is gracious to forgive.

1 John 1 verse 9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (NIV)

It is not easy at times to obey all Jesus asks. Jesus teaching is, in many ways, counter cultural - forgiving enemies - not taking revenge - going that extra mile - letting the aggressor hit the other cheek to pour burning coals on their heads.

It is a difficult, but a rewarding way is it not?

Our love of Christ is of the emotions as well as the mind. Some say we cannot trust our emotions, but Jesus showed emotion for us, we must show the same for Him. He wept, He was compassionate, merciful, forgiving. These are not stoic qualities but human and divine gifts to feel in the heart. Emotions of the heart we were created to show in our love for God and others. To weep at Jesus feet like the woman at the meal Jesus had with the Pharisee. Luke 7:36

Then as we grow in the Spirit of truth about ourselves that love might take us off to other fields, other parts of the world as missionaries, into danger, into discomfort where we still rejoice that we suffer for Christ as Peter and John

did when they were punished by being flogged for speaking of Jesus in the Sanhedrin.

Acts 5 verses 40 and 41

They (the Sanhedrin) called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

Jesus loves us so much that He did not leave us like orphans, He promised us the third person of the Trinity, His Holy Spirit. Another helper just like Him. The divine power we need to love in the way Jesus commands. The Spirit that will convict us of our fallen ways but also help us to recall Jesus teaching and understand them as we read in our word of life the Bible.

Verse 16 says, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever.”

What a promise for every believer we will have Jesus living within us by His spirit forever. Complete in our joy.

For Jesus to live in us it requires us to love Him and obey Him.

We have no finer example of the love of God and obedience than Jesus Himself going to the cross of redemption paying the price for our sins. A sacrificial love for humanity because of that love God has for us. If our Lord and Saviour could lead in this way then we should follow in sacrificial love that compels us to obey our Lord, our treasure above all else and the one whom we will live with for all eternity along with all those we are called to love, our neighbours friends and family of humanity.

Amen

Let us pray our prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession.

Loving Lord God

Let us bring our weariness and tiredness to You who picks up those who have fallen

and raises up those who are brought low

Bless those, good Lord,

who are bowed down under the burdens they must carry. We think of the health workers nurses doctors, care home staff medics ambulance drivers and all the services of those who put their life on the line to save us.

Help them all to keep on going.

Give them tokens of Your grace,

fresh vision and courage
and signs of encouragement in their struggle.

God our Father,
bless those who are lonely
those who have grown old
and whom the passing years have taken
all their friends away.

We pray for strangers in our land,
for asylum seekers and refugees,
separated by language and culture
from familiar ways and much loved customs.

Help the Church, we pray,
to be a place of acceptance and belonging,
a place of welcome and inclusion,
where all can find a home even at this challenging time of Covid 19 lock
down,
a listening ear, a friendly smile and a helping hand.

Gracious God,
who binds up the broken-hearted
and comforts those who mourn.
Bless those whose hearts are sore today.

We remember those who have lost loved ones for whom they have cared,
whose needs they have met,
whose lives have been so intertwined
that they still listen for a voice they will not hear again.

We remember wives who have lost husbands
and husbands who have lost wives;
parents who have lost children,
who find their homes strangely silent and empty now and children who have
lost parents,
who are confused by a world that seems
less secure and more frightening than before and all who for whom
familiar places, and sounds and smells
awaken memories that bring tears in their wake. Thank You for our faith.
May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Let us turn to God in trust

and recommit ourselves to God.
Send us forth in spirit this day
with the joy that no-one can take from us,
the life which is Your life
and the hope that gives strength to our actions. Help us to sing of our faith
and in that singing find our strength to go on, trusting in Jesus who lived
among us,
died for us and rose again
and who prays for us today,
even as we pray to Him.
In His name we pray
Amen

As we come to the end of our time of worship shall we sing together

CH4 182 Now thank we all our God

Now thank we all our God,
with heart and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done,
in whom his world rejoices ;
who from our mothers' arms
has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.

Oh, may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever-joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us,
and keep us in his grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills
in this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God
who reigns in highest heaven -
the Father and the Son
and Spirit - now be given :
the one, eternal God,
whom earth and heaven adore ;
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.

Benediction

Let us go now for this week ahead in the love of Christ remembering His words and may the blessing of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, rest upon us all now and forever.

Amen