

+ Crowe Hill + Fordingbridge + Horton Heath + Ringwood +

Sunday Service 14th June 2020

Welcome to this Sunday's Service

Theme: 'Amazing grace for all'

Lectionary Texts:

Exodus 19:2–8a Psalm 100 Romans 5:1–8 Matthew 9:35–10:8 (10:9–23)

Keeping in Touch

Last week was a cold week, so no-one felt able to take up our invitation to visit us in our garden. So, hoping that this coming week will be warmer, we invite you to call us up (473407) and agree a time to call round for a drink and a chat in the garden.

Looking at the future: the government has announced that church buildings are permitted to open for private prayer from 14th June onwards, and it still looks likely that church buildings might be permitted to open for worship and gatherings of other kinds from 5th July onwards. BUT, this is all with social distancing and hygiene requirements and various other anti-coronavirus provisions all in place and being adhered to. Most churches consider it most unlikely that they could comply, nor that they would want to re-open and attempt to do anything so restricted by so many constraints. Methodist and URC guidelines continue to be updated in response to the new government guidelines, and the advice is very restrained and cautious. We support our wider society, we do not act in ways which threaten the healthy process of emergence from the epidemic. Given the age profile of our four congregations, and the number of people who ought to continue to shield themselves, I think it is most unlikely that we could achieve much in the near future.

At Trinity United Church we have begun to survey all our former building users to see how they feel about the possibility of being permitted to restart activities. Early feedback reveals that they are uncertain if socially distanced activities are possible or worthwhile. Age Concern already has its permanent staff back offering telephone support and limited home visits.

The Foodbanks at Ringwood and Fordingbridge continue to be approximately twice as busy as this time last year. And in addition to this there is a separate government food box distribution system to vulnerable households.

Call to Worship

The Lord is gracious and merciful,
Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
The Lord is good to all
And his compassion is over all that he has made.

Psalm 145:8

Hymn: Amazing grace (unchained) (SOF 4/1702)

A modern version of John Newton's great hymn with added chorus. More about John Newton later on.

<https://youtu.be/YrwkCOUOliI>

1. Amazing grace! how sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me;
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to

fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed!

Chorus

*My chains are gone,
I've been set free,
My God, my Saviour has ransomed me.
And like a flood His mercy reigns,
Unending love, amazing grace.*

3. The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

4. The earth shall soon dissolve like
snow,
The sun forbear to shine.
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine.

Words: John Newton (1725–1807),
John P. Rees (1828–1900), Edwin O.
Excell (1851–1921) Arr. & add. chorus:
Chris Tomlin & Louie Giglio
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Prayer: Promise and Pain

Peace and faith, grace and hope, glory and love:
Thanks be to God for the power and goodness
in simple words that are big with mercy;
in great promises compactly spoken,
ready to unfold in our days and years.

Yet with them come affliction,
endurance and testing:
pains as sharp as thorns,
troubles that crowd in upon us,

burdens we struggle to bear.

Thanks be to God that we do not face these alone
that Christ died for us,
turning evil to good, and death into life,
bringing great mercies out of suffering,
and pardon out of sin.

Thanks be to God for promise.
Trust be to God in times of pain.
Confidence and joy be in God,
who pours the Holy Spirit
generously upon us and within us,
in the name of Jesus. Amen

Words: John Proctor

Lord's Prayer

Here is the 'wrap up' video of the 'Thy Kingdom Come' prayer project for 2020 to lead us into our Lord's Prayer.

<https://youtu.be/yUkGC3c1z-k>

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
for the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever.
Amen

Song: On Eagle's Wings

Lovely song of God's support for us all. A compilation of a wide variety of Bible verses including Exodus 19:4. Interestingly it isn't in any of our usual hymn or song books.

<https://youtu.be/nZcyEnwyTI>

1. You who dwell in the shelter of the
Lord,

Who abide in His shadow for life,
Say to the Lord, "My Refuge,

My Rock in Whom I trust."

Chorus

*And He will raise you up on eagle's wings,
Bear you on the breath of dawn,
Make you to shine like the sun,
And hold you in the palm of His Hand.*

2. The snare of the fowler will never capture you,
And famine will bring you no fear;
Under His Wings your refuge,
His faithfulness your shield.

3. You need not fear the terror of the night,
Nor the arrow that flies by day,
Though thousands fall about you,
Near you it shall not come.

4. For to His angels He's given a command,
To guard you in all of your ways,
Upon their hands they will bear you up,
Lest you dash your foot against a stone.

Words: Michael Joncas

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Bible Readings (ESV)

Exodus 19:2–8a

²They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, ³while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: ⁴'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."

⁷So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. ⁸All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD.

Psalms 100

¹Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!

²Serve the LORD with gladness!

Come into his presence with singing!

³Know that the LORD, he is God!

It is he who made us, and we are his;

we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

⁴Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise!

Give thanks to him; bless his name!

⁵ For the LORD is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

Romans 5:1–8

5 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Matthew 9:35–10:8

³⁵ And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

10 And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. ² The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶ but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, ⁴ cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.

Sermon: ‘Amazing grace for all’

Introduction

After the ‘Black Lives Matter’ and ‘I Can’t Breathe’ protests on the streets of the UK, and in particular, the toppling of the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol, I eagerly turned to my Bible to look up this week’s suggested lectionary texts to see if they would speak to the issues being raised in our world today. I wasn’t disappointed, for I expected to find something of relevance. Not because I knew what the texts were, but because I know my Bible. It is often said that God and Jesus and the Bible have a

'bias towards the poor'. Over and over again the words of the Bible speak out a prophetic voice highlighting the plight of the poor, the underdog, the oppressed, the marginalised, and the rejected 'sinner', and offering the downtrodden people hope, restoration, dignity, love and respect.

The Lectionary Texts

Exodus 19 – God speaks to his people whom God has led out of slavery and oppression in Egypt, and God calls them his 'treasured possession', his 'kingdom of priests' his 'holy nation'.

Psalms 100 – We may only be sheep, but we are God's sheep!

Romans 5 – The apostle Paul describes us all as 'weak' and as 'ungodly sinners', but he only does so in order to offer to each and every one of us love and grace and the Holy Spirit. We are all in this together, there is no them-and-us division, no one in the sight of God is more nor less deserving of this grace of God. God loves us all equally.

Matthew 9 – Jesus picks up the theme of sheep, he calls the people 'lost sheep', who are 'shepherd-less', 'harassed' and 'helpless'. And he has compassion on them, he tells them the good news of the kingdom of God which is for them, and he heals them, and he sends out his disciples to share the same ministry of proclaiming good news of the kingdom and healing these 'lost sheep'.

The Bible and Racism

The Bible constantly reminds us of our united basic human nature, we are all sinners. And it also reassures us that God loves every single one of us and wants us all to know that we are his children and can know his love. His gift of life-changing grace is poured out upon us because of Jesus and is for everyone. But although that is the underlying message to be found on almost every page, what you don't find are specific messages against racism, there is no commandment which says: 'Don't discriminate against people based on the colour of their skin.' Also what you do find is a Bible which almost everywhere takes the existence of slaves and slavery for granted, and never gives the commandment: 'Don't enslave one another.' The general principals about our equally shared human frailty and equally shared divine destiny are there on almost every page of the Bible for those who are willing to see them. But in the absence of clear commands, some people have found it hard to see the truth.

Structural Racism

Most white people in our country would, of course, say: 'I am not a racist. I do not discriminate against people because of the colour of their skin.' As individuals I trust we would all mean it if we say it. But this is not about what individuals say and do. We operate as a society, and our society is racist. It is a structural racism built up over generations. It is an imbedded racism built upon 'the way we do things around

here'. And because most of us are white we don't see what black people see. We are blinkered against the evidence which is all around us.

The toppling of the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol is an example. The people of Bristol first erected that statue through the public subscriptions of a grateful people to commemorate a generous benefactor and kind philanthropist of their city. They thought they were celebrating a great and good man whose deeds ought to be enduringly remembered as a public example of good citizenship. What they were blinkered against was where all his money came from. He was a slave trader, all his wealth came from selling human beings into a life of misery, brutality and early death as slaves, or from the profits of sugar cane and tobacco plantations worked by those slaves. An evil business, and evil money. And as far as I know Edward Colston never repented of his practices, never changed his ways. And at the time, no white person cared. And because of our blinkered structural racism, most of us have not cared either, down to last weekend.

John Newton

I opened this service with a version of John Newton's hymn 'Amazing Grace.' John Newton's story began in a similar way, but he did change, his eyes were opened, his blinkers were removed. As a young man John Newton was so despicable a seaman that his captain and his crew of a slave ship marooned him on a desert island, they couldn't stand to have him on board ship any longer! He was rescued from the island, only to be sold into slavery himself to a slaver and a black princess. He was rescued from slavery and returned home. It was shortly after this that he became a changed person and converted to a pious and evangelical Christian faith. But he continued as a slave ship captain! His religious conversion did not change his view of slavery. His blinkers were still on. He retired from the sea, he eventually became a Church of England curate in Olney, and many years later he wrote his famous hymn 'Amazing Grace' recalling his earlier conversion experience. Late in life he moved to become the priest of a London church, and there he met Wilberforce and other anti-slavery abolitionists. Now for the first time in his life John Newton wrote about his slave trading experiences and he wrote powerfully to provide evidence in support of the anti-slavery movement. It took a whole lifetime for his blinkers to be removed.

BAME

The coronavirus epidemic in the UK reveals the perilous state of BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicity) people in our country today. They are up to four times more likely to be infected by the virus, to suffer serious health consequences, and to die. And this is not because of the colour of their skin or their genetic background. It is down to the multitude of social factors which make up the structural racism, imbedded in our society. On a statistical average, BAME people are poorer than white people; BAME people are more likely to work in low paid jobs in the health and care sector; BAME people are more likely to live in households with more people living in each house; BAME people are more likely to live in crowded urban

neighbourhoods; BAME people are more likely to have a poorer diet and poorer health as a consequence; and this list could go on and on ... No one specific thing explains the disproportionate effect of the coronavirus epidemic on our BAME people. Structural racism imbeds injustice and discrimination across every area of our society. It is a multifaceted thing of ugliness. And because it is everywhere, we accept it as normal, our blinkers are on.

Paul

Paul, who wrote so beautifully about God's grace for all, first needed a powerful conversion experience. God forcibly and almost literally removed his blinkers from his eyes. (Acts 9:18) Formerly he was part of a posse tasked to hunt down despised Christians and murder them by stoning them to death without trial or recourse to justice. It is primarily because of that that Paul calls himself the worst of sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15) From that point on Paul put into practice his unblinkered view that God loved all his children equally and had no favourites, neither between races (Romans 2:11) nor between slaves and masters (Ephesians 6:9).

Compassion

Jesus 'saw the crowds', his unblinkered eyes were open, he saw them clearly and truthfully, and he 'had compassion them' because he saw that they were like 'lost sheep'. I have chosen as a final hymn for today: 'Come let us sing of a wonderful love' which contains the question: "Why do the wanderers roam?" The author Robert Walmsley doesn't try to answer his question. And I can't answer the problem of structural racism in one short sermon. Walmsley concludes by expressing a desire that his life should be lifted and he should be able to learn from Jesus. Like Jesus, may we have unblinkered eyes, so that we might see the crowds who are like lost sheep around us and have compassion on them. We pray for our blinkers to be removed. Amen.

Song: Pretty Amazing Grace

Not specifically a hymn or worship song. Neil Diamond has always been careful not to say more than was necessary about any of his songs, but it sounds like a convert's appreciation of 'amazing grace' to me.

<https://youtu.be/9wsNtO8nYYQ>

Pretty amazing grace is what You
showed me
pretty amazing grace is who You are
I was an empty vessel
You filled me up inside
and with amazing grace restored my
pride

Pretty amazing grace is how You saved
me
and with amazing grace reclaimed my
heart
love in the midst of chaos
calm in the heat of war
showed with amazing grace what love
was for

You forgave my insensitivity
and my attempt to then mislead You
You stood beside a wretch like me
Your pretty amazing grace was all I
needed.

Stumbled inside the doorway of Your
chapel
humbled in God by everything I found
beauty and love surround me
freed me from what I fear
ask for amazing grace and You appear

You overcame my loss of hope and faith
gave me a truth I could believe in
You led me to a higher place
showed Your amazing grace
when grace was what I needed

Look in a mirror I see Your reflection
open a book You live on every page
I fall and You're there to lift me
share every road I climb
and with amazing grace You ease my
mind

Came to You with empty pockets first
when I returned I was rich man
didn't believe love could quench my
thirst
but with amazing grace You showed me
that it can

In Your amazing grace I had a vision
from that amazing place I came to be
into the night I wandered
wandering aimlessly
found Your amazing grace to comfort
me.

Pretty amazing ...

You overcame my loss of hope and
faith,
gave me a truth I could believe in.
You led me to that higher place
showed me that love and truth and
hope and grace were all I needed.

Words: Neil Diamond

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Hymn: For the healing of the nations (R+S 620, SOF 3/1235, STF
696)

<https://youtu.be/OYFwJitauAM>

1. For the healing of the nations,
Lord, we pray with one accord;
For a just and equal sharing
Of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action
Help us rise and pledge our word.

2. Lead us forward into freedom;
From despair Your world release,
That, redeemed from war and hatred,
All may come and go in peace.

Show us how through care and
goodness
Fear will die and hope increase.

3. All that kills abundant living,
Let it from the earth be banned;
Pride of status, race or schooling,
Dogmas that obscure Your plan.
In our common quest for justice
May we hallow life's brief span.

4. You, Creator-God, have written
Your great name on humankind;
For our growing in Your likeness
Bring the life of Christ to mind;

That by our response and service
Earth its destiny may find.

Words@ Fred Kaan

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Prayer Poem

For those who fight injustice
and make a stand for good.
who strive to give the poor a chance
to live life as they should,
for all who labour, heart and soul.
to make our world more fair,
I ask your courage, succour, strength
Lord, answer, hear my prayer.

For those who show compassion,
who work to heal and mend,
who nurse the sick, support the weak,
encourage and befriend,
for all who reach out in your name
to offer love and care,
I ask your blessing, power, help
Lord, answer, hear my prayer.

For those who tackle conflict,
where wounds run red and raw,
who strive to conquer hatred
and put a stop to war,
who work to foster dialogue
despite the scars we bear;
I ask your guidance, vision, faith
Lord, answer, hear my prayer.

For those who try to witness
to Christ through word and deed,
to show his love embraces
each colour, culture, creed;
who point to light and life and hope
in which we all can share,
I ask your wisdom, grace and truth
Lord, answer, hear my prayer. Amen

Words: Nick Fawcett

Hymn: Come let us sing of a wonderful love (STF 443, SOF 1/72)

We end with a 'proper' hymn.

<https://youtu.be/XCSx7ZZ3-2I>

1. Come, let us sing of a wonderful love,
Tender and true;
Out of the heart of the Father above,
Streaming to me and to you.
Wonderful love,
Dwells in the heart of the Father above.

2. Jesus the Saviour this Gospel to tell
Joyfully came
Came with the helpless and hopeless to
dwell,
Sharing their sorrow and shame:
Seeking the lost,
Saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

3. Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet

Why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget:
Home! weary wanderers, home!
Wonderful love,
Dwells in the heart of the Father above.

4. Come to my heart, O Thou wonderful
love!
Come and abide;
Lifting my life till it rises above
Envy and falsehood and pride:
Seeking to be,
Lowly and humble, a learner of Thee.

Words: Robert Walmsley

A Blessing of Grace

Today, may you go in the grace and peace
and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May the grace he has given you
be the grace that you share with others.

Amen

Words: Max Lucado