

Christchurch – 25th October 2020 at 10:45am

BIBLE SUNDAY

Worship Leader: Tony Edmonds

Reader: Jackie Hamilton

Music: Tom Nichol, Catriona Bevan, Paul Arnold

Technicians: Steve Cook, John Hamblin



CALL TO WORSHIP - PSALM 78:1-4

Psalm 78 begins with these words:

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;

incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

I will open my mouth in a parable;

I will utter dark sayings from of old,
things that we have heard and known,
that our ancestors have told us.

We will not hide them from their children;

we will tell to the coming generation
the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might,
and the wonders that he has done.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Good morning everyone. Welcome to Christchurch's Online Worship for 25th October 2020. Whether you are joining in real time or on "catch-up" later in the week, may the Lord bless this time in His presence.

My name is Tony Edmonds, one of the worship leaders here, and I'm also one of two Area Leads with responsibility for Worship at Christchurch.

Joining me here this morning are musicians Tom Nichol, Catriona Bevan and Paul Arnold. Jackie Hamilton will be reading the Bible passage and also sharing a poem later in the service. Finally, twiddling the knobs and pressing the buttons today are Steve Cook and John Hamblin. Thank you all for making this service possible.

It is "Bible Sunday" today. The date in the church calendar when we take time to remind ourselves of the power, variety and depth of teaching and wisdom that is contained in Scripture. We give thanks that it is freely accessible to us and we promote the efforts of people who are still working hard to ensure everyone who needs a Bible can get one in their own language.

PRAYERS OF APPROACH

I invite you to pray now, as we approach God in faith.

Living God, you have spoken to your people across the centuries, you identified yourself with humankind in Jesus Christ, and you dwell within us through the Holy Spirit, which makes your presence come alive.

Loving God, having come to us, you call us to come to you, promising that **in** Christ we shall find rest, that **through** Christ our spiritual hunger will be satisfied and that **from** Christ we shall receive life in all its fullness.

Accept now the worship we offer and use us for your kingdom.

Gracious God, we come in response to your call ... to offer our worship ... our thanks ... our confession ... our lives. We come seeking your guidance and your strength. We come seeking your renewal and seeking your will.

Accept now the worship we offer and use us for your kingdom.

Lord of all, help us to come to you this day not just as an outward gesture, a matter of routine or duty, but to come to you in heart ... and in mind ... and in soul.

Help us to make space in our complicated lives to be still in your presence. May we live in you ... and you in us.

Accept now the worship we offer and use us for your kingdom.

We ask it through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN

SONG: "FROM THE BREAKING OF THE DAWN (EVERY PROMISE)" StF 156

From the breaking of the dawn
to the setting of the sun

I will stand on every promise of your word.

Words of power strong to save
that will never pass away;

I will stand on every promise of your word.

For your covenant is sure,
and on this I am secure:

I can stand on every promise from your word.

When I stumble and I sin,
condemnation pressing in,

I will stand on every promise of your word.

You are faithful to forgive,
that in freedom I might live,

so I stand on every promise of your word.

Guilt to innocence restored;
you remember sins no more;
so I'll stand on every promise of your word.

When I'm faced with anguished choice
I will listen for your voice,
and I'll stand on every promise of your word.
Through this dark and troubled land,
you will guide me with your hand
as I stand on every promise of your word.
And you've promised to complete
every work begun in me,
so I'll stand on every promise of your word.

Hope that lifts me from despair,
love that casts out every fear
as I stand on every promise of your word.
Not forsaken, not alone,
for the Comforter has come,
and I stand on every promise of your word.
Grace sufficient, grace for me,
grace for all who will believe.
We will stand on every promise of your word.

Keith Getty and Stuart Townend © 2005, Thankyou Music

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND CONFESSION

No matter what sort of literature you are into there is something in the Bible for everyone. Biography, love story, adventure story, poetry – even song-lyrics. Sometimes we hear about a book being someone's life's work, but this one was put together over many, many lifetimes – and it tells the story of how God loves his people, through thick and thin.

It is, of course, a *collection* of books, by many authors and that's why we can all find something that resonates with us personally. A favourite verse or passage that speaks to us. A character that we completely "get" and understand. A piece of theology or teaching that just rings so true and clear when we read it.

Before our prayers of thanksgiving, I'd like to ask you to think about your favourite bit of the Bible for a moment. Some words of Jesus? A moving psalm? A great story of awakening or triumph over adversity? Whatever it is, hold it in your mind again and appreciate the words once more.

(Pause)

Remember what Timothy wrote: that "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and

training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim 3:16-17)

Is there something **new** in those familiar words that God is saying this morning?

(Pause)

Let us pray.

Giving God and Living Word, we thank you for the treasure of your presence: precious moments, time without pressure ... where all of our busyness and our deadlines are put into perspective ... where a brief time with You can fill with meaning and carry so much blessing.

Giving God, we give thanks.

Giving God and Living Word, we thank you for the signs of your presence in the world around us - every day your creation opens like a great book, telling of your creative power, there from the beginning, and your abundant love, here and now.

Giving God, we give thanks.

Giving God and Living Word, we thank you for time to read and reflect on the Scriptures: words rooted in tradition, but fresh for

today. Riddles, parables, questions, hidden meanings. Songs welling up from the heart, laws to live by. And the story of your love embodied in Jesus; set down in different languages, but speaking to us in our own tongue.

Giving God, we give thanks.

And a prayer of confession.

Loving God, you have given us so much – your Word to guide us, your love to heal us, your spirit to encourage us – and you have given us each other, so that in community we may embody your love in the world.

But we confess that we often fail to live as your chosen and beloved people.

Impatient and intolerant, we fail to see your presence in the other person.

We hide precious truths which we hold in trust.

We let the possibility of peace slip through our fingers.

Loving and forgiving God, may we learn to forgive each other.

May we be open to the transforming power of your love.

May we be recreated as a people of peace. AMEN

READING – MATTHEW 22: 34-46

The Greatest Commandment

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

The Question about David’s Son

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: “What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” He said to them, “How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying,

‘The Lord said to my Lord,

“Sit at my right hand,

until I put your enemies under your feet”?”

If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?” No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

LINK – LOVE GOD. LOVE OTHERS

As we continue our journey through Matthew’s gospel in the weekly Lectionary readings it seems no coincidence that this passage should be appointed for “Bible Sunday”.

Most reference books have an instructional purpose – but they are not often the sort of books you’d want to sit down and read. One of the great things about the Bible is that it is an instruction manual – but a special one. One to show us about God’s nature and how he wants to have a closer relationship with each one of us - and it gives us instructions about how we can get to know him better.

Today’s reading seems to sum up the whole Bible teaching in a few verses. Love God with all you are and love everyone around you as dearly as you love yourself. Love underpins everything.

God is telling us through these words to learn to love His ways and to love other men and women as He loves them ... and leave everything else in His hands.

Jesus’s instructions are simple. Whenever we are confused about what the right thing to do is we have the “What Would Jesus Do?” mantra that can be boiled down to these two things.

The test is: “is it loving God and is it loving our neighbour?” If it is not then there is a fair chance it is wrong.

It is a short passage, but fundamental. Everything hangs on these two commandments: ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’

SONG: “MORE LOVE, MORE POWER” SoF 392

More love, more power
More of You in my life
More love, more power
More of You in my life

And I will worship You, with all of my heart
I will worship You, with all of my mind
I will worship You, with all of my strength
For You are my Lord

More love, more power
More of You in my life
More love, more power
More of You in my life

And I will seek your face, with all of my heart
And I will seek your face, with all of my mind
And I will seek your face, with all of my strength
For You are my Lord
For You are my Lord
You are my Lord

Jude Del Hierro © 2004 Mercy Vineyard Publishing

LINK – BIBLE SUNDAY

There are more than 7,000 documented languages in the world today, but just over half of them have no written Christian scriptures. That translates to 209 million people who do not, or cannot, have any part of the Bible to read in their own language. That makes **us** very fortunate.

Not only do we have a Bible in English, but also many varieties of translation that have been “improved” over years of historical and theological study: New English, Good News, New International, New Revised Standard, Contemporary English, and so on.

Many sections of the Bible are hard to understand, even when written in English, so people have made more accessible versions to enable as many as possible to read God’s Word.

The Message is described as an “accurate, but readable remix” of scripture straight from the original languages. It’s a paraphrase that doesn’t water down the Bible but makes it easier to digest.

The street bible doesn’t claim to be a translation of Scripture, but an overview of the basic story of God and his people as told by a 21st century storyteller. It’s designed to be read aloud and has an absolute minimum of religious words so that those who have never read the Bible, and those who’ve read it too much, can hear God speak.

Moving a little further from the original source we have **The Limerick Bible**. Clearly not meant as scripture to study in depth, but a delightful taster to introduce people to the stories and personalities contained in the best-selling book of all time.

Over hundreds of years and continuing today, people have put a huge amount of work into making the story of God’s relationship with his people accessible. After all, what use is the Word of God if nobody understands?

So ... how often do **we** make the time to open the Bible and sit down and listen to what God is trying to say to us through the words? Psalm 1 tells us that “Blessed is the one ... whose delight is in the law of the Lord and who meditates on his law day

and night.” (Psalm 1:1-2) It seems from this that reading the Bible is the key to a happy and healthy life as people of God.

<Video Overlay from <https://youtu.be/5uCO-Az38-U> (pictures only): >



Do we take our Bibles for granted? When we hear news, or see pictures, of communities receiving Bibles in their native tongue for the very first time, and how excited they get - sometimes camping out for the arrival of the shipment, and partying late into the night having received its precious cargo – do we consider and compare with our own attitude to Scripture?

I’m sure that for some people watching this English is not their first and most comfortable language, but if it is your native tongue then try to imagine how hard it would be for you if you had to do all your Bible reading in French. Even if you are a really good French-speaker, it just wouldn’t be the same as hearing and understanding it in your first language. That’s why these communities get so excited!

So I'd like to set a challenge. In thanksgiving for the joy of reading the Bible so freely and easily here in the UK, why not commit to help support the work of an organisation like the Bible Society?

<Picture Overlay>



They work tirelessly to translate the word of God into more languages and see that copies are freely available to as many people as want it. A Bible can be printed locally or shipped for only £5 and they, like so many other charities and good causes at the moment are really struggling with funding, so if you are able to help in this way, they would be especially grateful this year.

But more importantly, can all of us commit to opening those Bibles on our bookshelves or on our phones just a little bit more often? Remembering what a precious gift they really are to us.

If you need incentive or help then I can recommend "The Bible in One Year" from Alpha International.

<Picture Overlay>



It's a web site and a phone app that can be played as audio in about 20 minutes each day. It includes a Psalm, Old Testament and New Testament passages, read exceptionally well by David Suchet, and prayers and a brief explanatory talk from Nicky Gumbel to bring context and meaning to the Scripture. You can start at any time and it actually took me 16 months, but I'm so glad I did it.

And, of course, there are small Bible Study house groups meeting regularly to read and discuss Scripture in a comfortable

home setting – although more recently this has moved online to Zoom for many. Studying God’s Word together can really help with difficult passages as we each bring our own understanding and experience of God’s nature to the conversation. Contact a Christchurch steward or reach out through the church web site to find out more. There’s a study group meeting most nights of the week and during the day as well; so there’s a good chance of finding a group that fits your diary.

The Bible is not always an easy book to understand, and there are times when we do understand it and find the application of the lesson hard. We need help and guidance, from each other and from the Holy Spirit, but if we take time to study what it has to say, we will discover words which give meaning to all of life and discover the blessing mentioned in Psalm 1.

<Text Overlay>

“Blessed is the one ... whose delight is in the law of the Lord and who meditates on his law day and night.” (Psalm 1:1-2)

PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE AND LORD’S PRAYER

We turn now to our prayers for others – prayers for our neighbours. And I’d like to encourage you to be specific about the people you are praying for – be focussed. If you don’t know

a name, bring a face to mind. If you don’t know a face, hold a situation in your heart. We pray in the knowledge that God knows and loves each one of His creation. Let us pray ...

Think of someone at school, at work, at home, in your neighbourhood who is ill. Ask God to be with them and their family. *(Pause)*

Think of someone you know, a friend, a member of your family or someone who lives down the road who is unhappy or always on their own. Ask that God will help them to know that he is there. *(Pause)*

Think of someone who thinks they don’t matter any more or who feels that everything has gone wrong. Ask God to show them how much they matter to him. *(Pause)*

Now think of someone who is really, really happy; someone who is very excited; someone who has been given some good news. Ask God to share their joy. *(Pause)*

Think of someone you know – someone at school, a friend, a member of your family – who doesn’t go to church. Someone who doesn’t know how much God loves them. Ask God to fill them with his love. *(Pause)*

Think of someone you know who is very frightened; someone who doesn't know what to do, what to say or how to cope with what is making them afraid. Ask God to give them courage.

(Pause)

Think of yourself and all of the things you must do this week. Things you are looking forward to and things that you aren't; things that make you unhappy or afraid; and things that make you excited. Ask God to share everything, every day with you.

(Pause)

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.** AMEN

Let's all now say the Lord's Prayer out loud wherever you are. Use whichever version you are familiar with and use whichever language feels like your mother tongue. Although we are apart, we join together in praying the prayer that Jesus gave us.

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.

Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.

Amen.

POEM – "THE BIBLE IN 50 WORDS"

The Bible is 66 books with a total of 1,189 chapters. It has over 780,000 words. So, if someone asked you to boil the Bible down to just 50 words what words would you choose? Here is how Rudolpho Lamas did it ...

God made, Adam bit
Noah arked, Abraham split
Jacob fooled, Joseph ruled
Bush talked, Moses balked
Pharaoh plagued, People walked
Sea divided, Tablets guided
Promise landed
Saul freaked
David peeked
Prophets warned
Jesus born

God walked
Love talked
Anger crucified
Hope died
Love rose
Spirit flamed
Word spread
God remained

From "The One Hour Bible" by Rudolpho Lamas

CLOSING PRAYER

A closing prayer.

Living God. Dwell in us by Your spirit as we seek to love You in all we do, bringing Your Word alive to all those we meet. Work **in** us and **with** us and **through** us, to your glory. AMEN

SONG – "LORD REIGN IN ME (OVER ALL THE EARTH) StF 63

Over all the earth, You reign on high
Every mountain stream, every sunset sky
But my one request, Lord, my only aim
Is that You'd reign in me again

Lord, reign in me, reign in Your power

Over all my dreams, in my darkest hour
'Cause You are the Lord of all I am
So won't You reign in me again

And over every thought, over every word
May my life reflect the beauty of my Lord
'Cause You mean more to me than any earthly thing
So won't You reign in me again

Lord, reign in me, reign in Your power
Over all my dreams, in my darkest hour
'Cause You are the Lord of all I am
So won't You reign in me again

Brenton Brown © 1998 Vineyard Songs