

The Bride Valley Telephone Service for Sunday 23rd October 2022

Bible Sunday

Welcome in the name of Christ. God's grace, mercy and peace be with you: **and also with you**

1 Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided, urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way, sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided, Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

2 Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us, speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze, teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us, Lord of the word, receive your people's praise.

3 Lord, for our land, in this our generation, spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care; for young and old, for commonwealth and nation, Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

4 Lord, for our world; when we disown & doubt him, loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain; hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him, Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.

5 Lord, for ourselves; in living power remake us, self on the cross and Christ upon the throne; past put behind us, for the future take us, Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

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Opening Prayer

Lord God, our maker, you are the source of all our life and strength, the fountain of all that we know and the provider of all that we need; reach out to us in this act of worship, that it may be more than a formal exercise of religious tradition, but rather, a means of grace.

Draw near to us, Lord: **that we may come closer to you.**

Enlarge our understanding to take in some of your greatness; and make our minds sensitive to such light and truth as we can bear. Move us by your Spirit to respond to the mystery of your presence, be our daily companion on the journey of life – for you know the way we should go and only your purposes are of lasting worth.

Draw near to us, Lord: **that we may come closer to you.**

Forgive us when we seek after lesser things and turn away from you and from our neighbours, make us more aware of the needs of others and of your glory in the world around us. Disturb us with inner restlessness which will never be satisfied until we become what you have made us to be.

Draw near to us, Lord: **that we may come closer to you.**

Lord, hear our prayers and help us not only to speak but to listen, and not only to listen, but to obey, and not only to obey, but to love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

From The Electric Bible by Peter Dainty

The Collect:

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: help us so to hear them, to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word, we may embrace and for ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Psalm 119.129-136

Your decrees are wonderful; therefore, my soul keeps them. The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple. With open mouth I pant, because I long for your commandments. Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your custom towards those who love your name. Keep my steps steady according to your promise, and never let iniquity have dominion over me. Redeem me from human oppression, that I may keep your precepts. Make your face shine upon your servant and teach me your statutes. My eyes shed streams of tears because your law is not kept.

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 45: 22-end

Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness a word that shall not return: 'To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.'

Only in the Lord, it shall be said of me, are righteousness and strength; all who were incensed against him shall come to him and be ashamed. In the Lord all the offspring of Israel shall triumph and glory.

New Testament Reading Romans 15:1-6

We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Each of us must please our neighbour for the good purpose of building up the neighbour. For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.

May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reading: Luke 4:16-30

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, 'Is not this Joseph's son?' He said to them, 'Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, "Doctor, cure yourself!" And you will say, "Do here also in your home town the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum."'" And he said, 'Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.' When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

Reflection

Bible Sunday: What makes a favourite book?

Maybe there is something about our favourite books that make them powerful in our lives. Something about the context we first read them in, what they have taught us, how they have helped us understand and accept ourselves better. Favourite books usually have characters that we can relate to.

Well, I have a book to recommend to you today.

- It is the world's favourite book.
- It is the world best-selling book of the year, every year.
- It is a book that people have risked their lives for, many have died for it.
- A book that people continue, even today, to die for and risk their lives for.
- It is a powerful book, so powerful that rulers and leaders have banned it and burned it.
- It is full of relatable characters and captivating storylines.
- A book you can read over and over and still find new things in it.
- A book that changes lives

Of course! It is the Bible

But does this description match how you think of the Bible? How would you describe it?

Does it make it into your top 3 books of all time? What about top 10?

How does our culture and other people view the Bible?

Do the words from psalm 119 resonate with us at all?

The psalmist has a deep, deep love and longing for scripture.

It is the first thing on their mind in the morning and the last thing at night, in fact they stay awake just to meditate more on God's word.

In this psalm it tells us that the word of God is precious, the writer loves it more than great riches, more than gold or silver, they say it is sweeter to taste the honey.

At our late Queen's coronation, she was presented with the Bible, and when the archbishop gave it to her he said 'we present to you this book. The most valuable thing that the world affords'!

Sat amongst people from all over the world, dignitaries and leaders of countries, gold and silver, jewels and diamonds, clothes more fabulous than we can imagine, yet this book, is the most valuable thing the world affords.

The word of God is precious, and it is also powerful.

That is why leaders and rulers want it destroyed, why people want to burn it and ban it. Because it is powerful.

It is not just words on a page, these are the words of God, in it is the word of life.

Yes, it is written by fishermen, shepherds, doctors, speakers, kings, scholars, teachers, prophets, poor people, philosophers, historians.

They wrote different types of literature, poetry, historical accounts, letters.

100% the work of human authors but it is 100% the word of God.

Paul says that all of scripture is God-breathed. Or inspired by God.

You might say that Christopher Wren built St Paul's in London, it took 36 years. But he didn't lay a single stone, there were many people involved, stone masons, artists, carpenters.

But he was the architect, it was his idea, he inspired it.

Many people were involved in writing the Bible. But it is inspired by God, He is the architect, it is his word, scripture is God-breathed.

It is powerful, because it is the word of God.

The Bible is a precious book, and it is a powerful book.

Often in society, or as Christians, we want the latest thing, and then the next big thing, we want to find the key to it all, the thing that will bring success, the 5 steps to achieving our goals, and we have tried all sorts to attract people, to reach out to people.

We want a formula that God can tell us that we can then follow and know what to do.

But the thing is, it is really simple.

The thing God has already called us to, is to draw near to him.

To keep beginning at the beginning.

And we do this very simply, through reading the Bible and through prayer.

Through these two things we will draw closer and closer to God.

And as WE drawn near to God, as WE seek Jesus, OTHERS will find HIM.

Let me repeat that.

As WE seek Jesus OTHERS will find him.

The word of God is precious and powerful and simply reading it, seeking God in it, will change our lives and the lives of those around us. People across the world, through all ages, have been drawn to scripture. God is drawing people to himself whether we are involved or not.

Why do we read the Bible? Because we want to know God.

When we read the bible, either together or own our own, I urge each of us to read it expecting that through the words on the page and the stories told in its pages that God will meet with us.

Expecting that God will reveal himself to you in relevant and important ways.

Read it knowing that it is God's primary way of communicating with His people.

Often, we meet people who ask, why does God not show himself to us? If God is real, why has he not spoken to us. But he HAS! He has revealed himself in creation, in Jesus and in the bible!

He wants to meet with us in prayer and in reading these words, words that are God-breathed, full of the Holy Spirit. He wants to talk to you today through this book. This precious and powerful book.

Prayers of intercession - Let us pray:

For those who have no Bible in their own language – for those who have to hide their Bible for fear of discovery – for those who translate and develop and print and send out bibles – for the work of the

Bible Society – for all who use the bible in their work – for all whose job it is to interpret and share what they have learned (lay and ordained) – for a world beginning to lose the influence of the bible
For each of us that we might find anew a love for your Word – that we might be led to and open to good interpretation, discussion and reasoning on your word – that you might speak into our lives and into our world and equip each one of us with inspiration and enthusiasm for the work of your kingdom. **Amen**

Prayer of Humble Access

Lord, we come to this your table trusting in your love alone, hoping in your mercy, for we have no goodness of our own. Yet you do not give us only crumbs, which from your table fall; you provide that bread and wine, which is the richest food of all. Broken bread and broken body, poured out wine and blood you give, we in you and you in us Lord, by this grace forever live.

Though we cannot receive you sacramentally at this time we receive from you spiritually in the nourishment of us you freely give.

(Adapted from Humble Access – Electric Bible)

And now we join our prayers together in the words of the Lord's Prayer:

**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.**

Final Prayer

God of compassion, through your Son Jesus Christ you have reconciled your people to yourself. As we follow his example, may we obey you with willing hearts and serve one another in holy love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Final Hymn: O Jesus I have promised

1 O Jesus, I have promised
to serve thee to the end;
be thou for ever near me,
my Master and my Friend:
I shall not fear the battle
if thou art by my side,
nor wander from the pathway
if thou wilt be my guide.

3 O Jesus, thou hast promised
to all who follow thee,
that where thou art in glory
there shall thy servant be;
and, Jesus, I have promised
to serve thee to the end:
O give me grace to follow,
my Master and my Friend.

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

4 O let me see thy foot-marks,
and in them plant mine own;
my hope to follow duly
is in thy strength alone:
O guide me, call me, draw me,
uphold me to the end;
and then in heaven receive me,
my Saviour and my Friend.

John Ernest Bode (1816-1874) (Public Domain)