

Winchester, Eastleigh & Romsey Circuit
SERVICE AT HOME – Sunday 5th May 2024

Prepared by Revd John Archer

Call to Worship

Pour into our hearts, O God, the love that casts out fear, the truth that sets us free and the grace that is sufficient for all our needs. Though you are unseen, do not be unknown. Though you are hidden from our eye, let us rejoice in your beauty at the last.

Louisa M Alcott (1833 – 1888)

Read pray or sing StF 28 Jesus calls us here to meet Him

[Jesus call us here to meet him. Lyric video \(StF 28\) \(youtube.com\)](#)

- 1 Jesus calls us here to meet him
as, through word and song and prayer,
we affirm God's promised presence
where his people live and care.
Praise the God who keeps his promise;
praise the Son who calls us friends;
praise the Spirit who, among us,
to our hopes and fears attends.
- 2 Jesus calls us to confess him
Word of life and Lord of all,
sharer of our flesh and frailness,
saving all who fail or fall.
Tell his holy human story;
tell his tales that all may hear;
tell the world that Christ in glory
came to earth to meet us here.
- 3 Jesus calls us to each other,
vastly different though we are;
creed and colour, class and gender
neither limit nor debar.
Join the hand of friend and stranger;
join the hands of age and youth;
join the faithful and the doubter
in their common search for truth.

John L. Bell (b. 1949) and Graham Maule (b. 1958)

Prayers

Father we come to you in praise, for the Heir of your majesty is the friend who shared our weakness, and his rising from the dead has made us heirs with him.

As we gather to worship you, we know that our prayer is heard, and that your Spirit has new truth to quicken us with joy.

Let him declare to us more of the truths of Jesus:
the words of our Saviour, to echo in our conscience
the face of our Saviour, to look into our heart,
the wounds of our Saviour, to bring us forgiveness,
the life of our Saviour, to strengthen our service.
In the name of our Saviour, we come to you today.
Amen

OT Reading Psalm 98

Read pray or sing StF 347 Crown Him with many crowns

[Hymn: Crown Him with many crowns \(StF 347\) \(youtube.com\)](#)

- 1 Crown him with many crowns,
the Lamb upon his throne.
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns
all music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing
of him who died for thee,
and hail him as thy matchless King
through all eternity.
- 2 Crown him the Son of God,
before the worlds began;
and ye who tread where he has trod,
crown him the Son of Man,
who every grief has known
that wrings the human breast,
and takes and bears them for his own,
that all in him may rest.
- 3 Crown him the Lord of life,
who triumphed o'er the grave,
and rose victorious in the strife
for those he came to save.
His glories now we sing,
who died, and rose on high;
who died, eternal life to bring,
and lives, that death may die.
- 4 Crown him the Lord of peace,
whose power a sceptre sways
from pole to pole, that wars may cease,
absorbed in prayer and praise.
His reign shall know no end,
and round his pierced feet
fair flowers of paradise extend
their fragrance ever sweet.

5 Crown him the Lord of love;
behold his hands and side --
rich wounds, yet visible above,
in beauty glorified.
All hail, Redeemer, hail!
for thou hast died for me;
thy praise and glory shall not fail
throughout eternity.

Matthew Bridges (1800-1894) and Godfrey Thring (1823-1903)

Prayers

Our Heavenly Father, we bring our lives to you,
asking forgiveness for when we have sinned and
fallen short. Help us to make our deeds fit our
words, and our conduct match our profession.
Grant that we may not praise service and practise
selfishness.

Grant that we may not praise love and practise
bitterness.

Grant that we may not praise honesty and practise
falsehood.

Grant that we may not praise generosity and
practise meanness.

Keep us Father God, from bringing discredit by our
life and our actions, our words and our behaviour
on the faith which we profess, the church to which
we belong, and the Master who we seek to serve.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord

Amen

Pray

The Lord's Prayer

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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

NT Reading John 15 : 9 – 17

Read pray or sing StF 277 My song is love unknown

[My song is love unknown StF 277 \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

- 1 My song is love unknown,
my Saviour's love to me,
love to the loveless shown,
that they might lovely be.
O who am I,
that for my sake
my Lord should take
frail flesh and die?
- 2 He came from his blest throne,
salvation to bestow;
but they made strange, and none
the longed-for Christ would know.
But O my Friend,
my Friend indeed,
who at my need
his life did spend!
- 3 Sometimes they strew his way,
and his sweet praises sing;
resounding all the day
hosannas to their King.
Then 'Crucify!'
is all their breath,
and for his death
they thirst and cry.
- 4 Why, what has my Lord done?
What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run,
he gave the blind their sight.
Sweet injuries!
Yet they at these
themselves displease,
and 'gainst him rise.
- 5 They rise, and needs will have
my dear Lord made away;
a murderer they save,
the Prince of Life they slay.
Yet cheerful he
to suffering goes,
that he his foes
from thence might free.
- 6 In life no house, no home,
my Lord on earth might have;
in death, no friendly tomb

but what a stranger gave.
What may I say?
Heaven was his home;
but mine the tomb
wherein he lay.

7 Here might I stay and sing,
no story so divine:
never was love, dear King,
never was grief like thine!
This is my Friend,
in whose sweet praise
I all my days
could gladly spend.

Samuel Crossman (c. 1624-1683)

Sermon

My text for today is the last verse of the gospel reading (John ;15 – verse 17) *“This, then, is what I command you: love one another”*

The gospel of John is the 'theological' one with lots of reflection and depth. The Synoptic gospels (the others) are full of stories parables and miracles. John has reflection and teaching – but what powerful teaching! The famous Swiss systematic theologian, Dr Karl Barth was once asked “What is the most profound thought that has entered and stayed in your mind?” After a pause he said “The most profound thought I've ever known is the simple truth “JESUS LOVES ME THIS I KNOW, FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO”. What John writes about Jesus and love is at the heart of our gospel, and it is rooted in practicability

1. First of all God loves us and chooses us

Have you ever gone for an important interview for a job that you really wanted? Your C.V has been carefully crafted and sent ahead. Your referees have perjured themselves on your behalf! Now you carefully check your appearance, before stepping into the interview room. Your throat is dry, your palms sweaty, you have a nervous smile! The interview starts. All because you hope that you will be selected. Failure and rejection are a real possibility, but it is the hope that keeps you going until that Alan Sugar moment!! To be chosen, to be picked out, to be opted for, to be taken on! It is only when you have been chosen that you are free to choose to take it or leave it. It is only then that

you have the power to choose! When John talks about the love of God he is clear *“This is the love I mean. Not our love for God, but God's love for us. God says You did not choose me I chose you”*

You don't have to turn up at an interview to discover if God will choose us or not. He has already made an everlasting decision to love us. He has opted for us, made his choice, taken us on. “As the Father has loved me so I love you. Remain in my love”

God chose to love us. Jesus showed that there was no greater love than to die for us. So the first thing to draw from this passage is that God has chosen to love us. The onus is now on us – you and me, to respond or not. Take a few moments to consider whether you have responded.

2 God loves others through us

“As I have loved you so you must love one another” I heard a story recently about a good mother who frequently told her 6 yr old son to obey the Golden Rule. “Always remember that we are here to help others “One day he replied “Well what are the others here for?” Remember the scribe's question to Jesus “Which is the first commandment?” Jesus went back to Leviticus and Deuteronomy for his answer. Both commandments involve love We must love God and our fellows. *“If a man says I love God and hates his brother he is a liar, for he who hates his brother who he has seen, how can he love God who he has not seen?”* (1 John 4:12)

How do we do it? That is the challenge. It is much easier to check on our love for one another, than our love for God.

The litmus paper test is 'Love others like Jesus loves us.'

a) That love was Inclusive

He included the whole human race. Outsiders and insiders, tax collectors, harlots – all are included. No-one can be excluded. Race, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, cultural habit – all are included. Jesus could see Matthew the disciple and gospel writer when he looked at Levi the tax collector!

Here is (allegedly!) a recently discovered letter.

To: Jesus, son of Joseph, carpenter's shop Nazareth

From: Jordan Management Consultants, Jerusalem

It is our opinion that the 12 men you have picked to manage your new organisation lack the background, educational and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking.

They do not have the team concept.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has no qualities of leadership. The 2 brothers, James and John, place personal interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrated a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine company morale.

We feel it is our duty to tell you that Matthew has been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau. James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus have racial leanings and both registered high on the manic-depressive scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness. Has a keen business mind and contacts in high places. He is highly motivated and ambitious. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right hand man.

We wish you every success in your new venture.

b) That love was Selfless

There are times in 'loving' when we think of what we will get from it, what will make us happy. Jesus never thought of himself. He had no peacock complex, never strutting around showing off his superiority.

I love this story about the great Indian Christian, Sadhu Sundar Singh. He was travelling through the mountains of Northern India in the cold winter time. They came across a man desperately weak lying on the roadside. They stopped beside him and discussed what to do. His friend said that if they delayed and helped him they would likely get caught in the icy conditions. They disagreed and his

friend went on alone. Sundar Singh lifted the man onto his back where he clung on and they continued on the mountain track. Some hours later they came across his friend's body frozen in the snow. Singh and the man survived because the exertion needed to carry him brought warmth and life to both their bodies.

Selfless love is its own reward.

c) That love brought forgiveness

There is a Jewish proverb "Love thy neighbour, even when he plays the trombone!" Jesus forgave his parents when they misunderstood his commitment. He forgave his disciples when they responded so inadequately on occasions. He prayed for the soldiers who were crucifying him. And he forgives us today. The love which has not learnt to forgive cannot do anything else but shrivel and die.

Conclusion

We remember that

God has chosen us

We have the power to choose him

God commands us to love others in the way Jesus first loved us:

inclusively

selflessly

with forgiveness.

"And now I give you a new commandment. Love one another"

Read pray or sing StF 372 Come down O love divine

[Come down O love divine StF 372 \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

1 Come down, O Love divine,
seek thou this soul of mine,
and visit it with thine own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
within my heart appear,
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

2 O let it freely burn,
till earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes, in its heat consuming;
and let thy glorious light
shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

3 Let holy charity
mine outward vesture be,
and lowliness become mine inner clothing;
true lowliness of heart,
which takes the humbler part,
and o'er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.

4 And so the yearning strong,
with which the soul will long,
shall far outpass the power of human telling;
for none can guess its grace,
till he become the place
wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

Bianco da Siena (d. 1434)

translated by Richard Frederick Littledale (1833-1890)

Prayers for others

As we turn our minds to pray for others we find it
hard to understand why people suffer
the victims of flawed government
with limited wisdom, goodness and justice.

We pray that your Spirit may blow in our world
stirring up the hearts of leaders and people that
they may be prepared to work and to suffer to
create peaceful and just societies.

We find it hard to understand why your family on
earth harden their hearts against each other. We
pray for those who are the victims of

famine, intolerance, warfare and poverty

We pray that your Spirit may inspire the world,
warming up cold hearts so that leaders and people
may be prepared to sacrifice what they do not
really need to give others life.

We find it painful to understand why the lives of so
many of your children are limited by illness or
handicap. But we pray for those who are victims of
such limitations, those with frustrated lives

the sick, the dying, the embittered

We pray for all those who love and care for them.

We pray for those who have lost people they love,
those who are ill, those who are housebound.

*Take a moment to remember the peoples of
Ukraine, Russia, and Palestine who are suffering
because of conflicts.*

Lord may your Holy Spirit be close to all we have
remembered.

In Jesus' name Amen

Read pray or sing StF 531 What a friend we have in Jesus

[What a Friend We Have in Jesus \(Tune: Converse
- 3vv\) \[with lyrics for congregations\]
\(youtube.com\)](#)

- 1 What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer!
- 2 Have we trials and temptations,
is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged:
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness:
take it to the Lord in prayer.
- 3 Are we weak and heavy-laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour, still our refuge --
take it to the Lord in prayer!
Do your friends despise, forsake you?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
in his arms he'll take and shield you,
you will find a solace there.

Joseph Medlicott Scriven (1819-1886)

Blessing

From the furthest north to the remotest south
God's blessing be upon us.
From the day of our birth to the moment of death
God's blessing be upon us.
For a life which fulfils all its potential
God's blessing be upon us.
For an eternity with peace and justice triumphant
God's blessing be upon us.
Until all people are one in the presence of the Lord
God's blessing be upon us. Amen

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