

HAEBEA Home Worship

25th October 2020 – Revd Debbie Hodgson

Opening Prayer

Loving God, I come before you now in the peace of this moment to offer you my worship, my thanks and my praise.

Thank you that that you are with me now,

as I remember your promise to always be with me and never leave me.

When I am troubled and feel afraid, you are my comfort and strength.

When all seems well, you are the joy within my heart.

When I do not know the way to go,

you are the lamp for my feet, and the light for my path.

And so, surrounded by your love, open my heart that I may truly worship and praise you for all you have been and are, and ever will be;

the One who seeks, and saves, forgives and loves beyond measure.

[Spend a few moments to offer your own prayer of thanks and praise]. Amen.

Bible Reading – Matthew 22: (23-33) 34-40

Thoughts

Oh to have the wisest of responses when being challenged. All too often in such a situation I will turn to blundering, unconsidered, replies to try and get myself out of the hole I have just been put in by a challenger. The phrase ‘drop the spade and stop digging’ comes to mind. But not so for Jesus. He had just been (unsuccessfully) challenged by the Sadducees, through the most ridiculous question from their own perspective really. They chose to try and trip Jesus up on the matter of resurrection, despite themselves not believing in such a thing. Jesus is quite clear to them about their lack of understanding of the Scriptures, or God’s power (v29).

Now, not for the first time, it is the turn of the Pharisees. This is a totally different matter, as they would consider themselves knowledgeable scholars of the Hebrew Scriptures. You can almost hear the cogs of their brains whirring as they think ‘Now we’ll get him. Let’s challenging him over God’s commandments as given in the book of the law’. And so the question is asked, ‘Which is the greatest commandment?’ Now let’s be honest about this. On the face of it there was a lot of choice. God didn’t just leave 10 commandments, as given through Moses. There are some 653 (there or thereabouts) in all to consider. Take a trip through Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

We all know Jesus reply well. Now he gives them, and us, on the face of it just two to take hold of. Firstly, and without doubt most important, we are called to Love God with our whole being.

Then also to love others with the same love we would want afforded to ourself. Beware though, if we stop there and make it all sound so simple. Jesus, in his response, isn't throwing away all the commandments that God had given Israel and called them to follow, but wrapping them up in the core of God's law of love for and towards his people. Jesus is clear to point out that all God's law, and all the words of the prophets are enveloped in these two commands he now gives. Is Jesus saying 'everything you know in your heads now has to be learned in your hearts.'?

Jesus has accused the Sadducees of not even knowing the Scriptures. The Pharisees *know* them well. They have used them to their own ends over many years to constrain God's people, but Jesus now wants them to learn the loving life that is possible through *living* the commands.

The word of challenge and encouragement that Jesus offers us through this encounter is firstly, know your Scriptures. We can only do this if it they are part of our daily 'diet'. And secondly, allow God by his Holy Spirit to teach us to live according to what we now know in a way that loves and honours God and shows love to our neighbour. I suspect that in learning this there will need to be fewer times to 'put down the spade' and instead, a wiser response ready when challenged to give account of my, our, faith when people ask.

Hymn

[you can listen to this at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6pqPIXLj_HI
Or the words are below for you to read or sing]

- 1 Let love be real, in giving and receiving,
without the need to manage and to own ;
a haven free from posing and pretending,
where every weakness may be safely known.
Give me your hand, along the desert pathway,
give me your love wherever we may go.

*As God loves us, so let us love each other :
with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.*



- 2 Let love be real, not grasping or confining,
that strange embrace that holds yet sets us free ;
that helps us face the risk of truly living,
and makes us brave to be what we might be.
Give me your strength when all my words are weakness ;
give me your love in spite of all you know.

*As God loves us, so let us love each other :
with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.*

3 Let love be real, with no manipulation,
no secret wish to harness or control ;
let us accept each other's incompleteness,
and share the joy of learning to be whole.
Give me your hope through dreams and disappointments ;
give me your trust when all my failings show.

*As God loves us, so let us love each other :
with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.*

Michael Forster (b. 1946)

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Prayer

[Keep a moments silence as you come before God in prayer]

Lord, you call us to love our neighbour.

And so, in love we bring our world-wide neighbours before you now in prayer.

I pray for all who feel unloved, or vulnerable at this time...

Those who live their lives in fear from others

or circumstances in which they find themselves...

I pray for those who are struggling, physically, emotionally, economically...

Those whose lives have been changed beyond recognition

through circumstances beyond their control....

I pray for all who are ill, at home or in hospital...

For those who watch and wait, and for those who mourn the loss of a loved one...

I pray that your Church would learn what it is to love as you love,

and so bring hope and life to the world, and glory to your name. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer: Our Father ...

Blessing

May the God of love;

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

lead you in the ways of love,

and bless you now and always.

Amen.

L the Lord your *God*

O with all your *heart*

V with all your *soul*

E with all your *mind.*

Matthew 22:37