

HAEBEA Home Worship: No.73

18th July 2021 – Revd Blair Kirkby

Call to Worship

Pray God, be with me now as I open my heart and clear my head for thee.

Pray God, make me thankful for this quiet moment so that I can worship you well.

Pray God, give me eyes to see and ears to hear
the word that you would speak to me this day.

For I ask it in Christ's name.

Amen.

Bible Readings

Galatians 5.13 & 14: You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh ; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself."

Hebrews 12.1 & 2: "Let us run the race that is set before looking to Christ Jesus who is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."

Some thoughts about freedom and the building up of the Church

After a year and a half of a pandemic that has had terrible consequences for our world, this is the last of the HAEBEA Home Worship sheets. The purpose of these sheets was always to give HAEBEA people some weekly spiritual support until that day when we were all able to return to our buildings with some measure of freedom and safety. That day, so called "Freedom Day", is almost here. On July 19th, Covid 19 regulations are coming to an end and with that ending we shall have a degree of freedom returned to us, but the question for the Church, given the devastating effect that Covid has had on our programmes and church attendance, is how do we use this freedom responsibly and how do we start to rebuild our communal life with it?

Regarding the rebuilding our communal life, I have these four suggestions:

1. The goal should not be a return to "what was," but a return to being Christ-centred. Much of "what was" is never going to come back. People have died, programmes that were faltering are now finished, and the world has changed in substantial ways, but the life-giving power of the Church has never come from trying to return to a past era, even if that era was quite a good one. Instead, our power and strength has always come from focusing upon the One who is both our guide and our salvation....and from addressing the question, "How would He have us live in this present era?" The race that we are to run is always with an eye to Him who is the "pioneer and perfecter of faith.
2. The goal should be faithfulness, not numbers. Many churches right now are getting about half the numbers that they were before the pandemic, but the goal should never be to build up the numbers at all costs. Instead, the goal is always to be faithful to Christ and

the broad principals of scripture that make for a life rooted in God, knowing that this sort of faithfulness lived out by the leaders and laity of the church will build up the numbers soon enough.

3. The church should be adaptable in all ways – always. Being adaptable is taking away sacred cows and replacing them with God-focused ministries that are more appropriate for the times and the context. If we have learned anything from Covid and from the technological changes that we have had to make because of Covid, it is that, sometimes, we have to change even the things that we deem to be most sacred about ourselves and that good can come even from those changes that are hardest to make. Who would have guessed that we would have to close our physical Sunday services for months and that, as result, we would learn to worship together with new technologies?
4. Freedom always comes with responsibility. Paul advises in Galatians 5 that though we are made for freedom we are still bound by the one command, “to love our neighbours as ourselves.” This means that even though Covid 19 regulations will be lifted, we will still have to care for one another and maintain measures that protect one another from the virus. This may mean that want to encourage people to wear masks even as we sing praises to God.

A Word of Prayer

Loving Lord Jesus, be with me as I find my way forward in freedom and love. Be with your people everywhere as they seek to be faithful to you and loving towards others. Make me ready to do your will and brave to do your deeds. Protect me from impure spirits and give me healing hands. Make me grateful for the life that you have afforded and willing to share it with others. For I ask it in your name. Amen

Hymn: May the mind of Christ my Saviour

https://youtu.be/Y_ZBhSxWots

May the mind of Christ my Saviour
Live in me from day to day
By His love and pow’r controlling
All I do and say

May the Word of God dwell richly
In my heart from hour to hour
So that all may see I triumph
Only through His pow’r

May the peace of God, my Father
Rule my life in every thing
That I may be calm to comfort
Sick and sorrowing

May the love of Jesus fill me
As the waters fill the sea
Him exalting, self abasing
This is victory

May I run the race before me
Strong and brave to face the foe
Looking only unto Jesus
As I onward go

May His beauty rest upon me
As I seek the lost to win
And may they forget the channel
Seeing only Him

The Blessing

Bless me now O God so that I might be strong and true for you and so that I might be fair and good to my neighbours. Amen.