

Traditional Home service Sunday 2nd May

OPENING PRAYER

God our redeemer, you have delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of your Son: grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life, so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Let us return to the Lord our God and say to him:

**Father,
we have sinned against heaven and
against you.
We are not worthy to be called your
children.
We turn to you again.
Have mercy on us,
bring us back to yourself
as those who once were dead
but now have life through Christ our
Lord.**

PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts.
Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (*To God be the glory*)

READINGS - Acts 8.26-40
1 John 4.7-21
John 15.1-8

TALK

CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

*Spend some time praying for our nation,
our community and our families.*

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.

HYMN 2 (*Jesu, joy of our desiring*)

CONCLUSION

The love of the Lord Jesus
draw you to himself,
the power of the Lord Jesus
strengthen you in his service,
the joy of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you
always.
Amen.

HYMNS TO USE

1 To God be the glory, great things
he hath done:
so loved he the world that he gave
us his son,
who yielded his life an atonement
for sin,
and opened the lifegate that all may
go in.

Refrain:

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let
the earth hear his voice!*

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let
the people rejoice!*

*O come to the Father, through
Jesus the Son,
and give him the glory, great things
he hath done.*

2 Oh, perfect redemption, the
purchase of blood,
to ev'ry believer the promise of
God.
The vilest offender who truly
believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon
receives.

[Refrain]

3 Great things he hath taught us,
great things he hath done,
and great our rejoicing through
Jesus the Son,
but purer, and higher, and greater
will be
our wonder, our transport, when
Jesus we see.

[Refrain]

1 Jesu, joy of our desiring,
Holy wisdom, love most bright,
Drawn by you, our souls aspiring,
Soar to uncreated Light.
Word of God, our flesh that
fashioned
With the fire of life impassioned,
Striving still to truth unknown,
Soaring, dying, 'round your throne.

2. Through the way where hope is
guiding,
Hear what peaceful music rings;
Where the flocks in you confiding,
Drink of joy from deathless springs!
Theirs is beauty's fairest pleasure;
Theirs is wisdom's holiest treasure;
You do ever lead your own,
In the love of joys unknown.

Sermon Notes - Adrian Morton

John 15:1-8 How to find meaning in life?

I want to talk about How to find meaning in life, no matter what we do.

It's tempting to think that to live a life of meaning we need to have an exotic job - e.g. F1 racing driver if you're into that kind of thing, or a Prime Minister.. someone who has influence over many people.

And of course, having a role that impacts the lives of others, has influence over others in a good way can give a degree of meaning and satisfaction.

<I'm always in awe of organisations like Medecins Sans Frontieres who send doctors to areas of the world that need aid and medicine the most...>

But not many of us can be F1 racing drivers. or a Prime minister... or even a doctor able to travel the world..

Most of us have more mundane jobs or roles.

Can we find meaning in life no matter what we do?

Well of course, I believe we can. Because ultimately, real meaning in life comes not from what you do, but from who you know.

If people are designed for relationship, which I believe they are. Then it is the quality of relationships that will bring meaning to life.

And it's the quality of one particular relationship that will give ultimate meaning to life.

I believe everyone is born with a deep spiritual hunger. Everyone has a hole in their soul that needs filling...

And in this John 15 reading, Jesus talks about this.

It is part of his final conversation with His disciples before he is crucified.

So it's an important conversation! Not that anything Jesus said was unimportant.

But this was particularly important.

The last things you say in life, you want to have impact. And Jesus uses Vineyard imagery. Vine and branches imagery...

To describe a relationship that he wants with us.

That is so close, that His life, His resurrected life, flows through our life. And it's that relationship of friendship with this Jesus that will give meaning, as well as purpose to our lives.

No matter what we do.

We can stack shelves, sweep roads, be on a production line, or be a health worker bringing aid across the world.

In one sense it doesn't matter.

If you have that relationship with this Jesus, then it's that which will ultimately bring you meaning in life.

Think about the imagery Jesus uses... He's the Vine and we are the branches...

If you've ever looked at a grape vine.. you will know it's fairly difficult to see where the vine ends and the branch begins...

And what nourishes the branch is hidden...

But the fruit is seen on the branch. You don't see what makes the fruit, you just see the end product.

I hear some Christians say something like this.

"Oh Lord, more of you and none of me..."
"I don't want to be a barrier to you Lord..."

And I get the sentiment of that of course.

But there is also a danger in it as well.

Because Jesus needs our humanity.
He wants our lives, our humanity to show fruit.

And to be fruitful, it's His life that needs to flow through our life.

Don't be afraid of your humanity.

Jesus isn't phased by our humanity.
A humanity that includes our brokenness, our scars, our weaknesses.
He needs it to work through it...

All of us have different personalities, and as long as we are being authentic to who we are.
Brokenness, scars and all.

All he requires is a yielded heart.
Someone who will act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with Him.

It's the mature person who can see the fruit in their lives.
Whether that is internal, character like fruit.
or external, good works type fruit.

Who can see that displayed in their life, for others to see, but who knows that the hidden life that has produced that fruit comes from the Vine.

Comes from the life of Jesus in us.
Therefore it then becomes a life that glorifies the Father.

The Father didn't send Jesus his son out of pity for us.
Or because He wanted something from us.
And certainly not because we deserved anything.

God paid the human race the supreme honour by becoming one of us.
Then He paid us an even greater honour in His death and resurrection, He made a way for us to become one with Him.

To abide, to remain, in Him.
As He remains or abides in us.

It's the most astonishing act of honour that has been bestowed upon us.

That we can live life knowing the life giving presence of Jesus.

And it is that which gives meaning and purpose to our lives.
No matter what we do...

Every person we encounter is someone who Christ has honoured in His life, death and resurrection.

Someone He is inviting to abide in Him and He in them.
They may not know that, but we know that.

Which means of course that we are to treat people accordingly.

Within 6 verses of this John 15, Jesus says remain or abide 10 times.

It means stay closely connected.

And it's a command! Why a command?

Well, commands are needed when something doesn't come naturally.

It is natural to think that to achieve more, to see more fruit in our lives we need to do more.

But Jesus doesn't say go and do more to bear much fruit.
Or go and study more.
He doesn't say you need more volunteers, more people around you.
He doesn't say you need a bigger budget.

None of those things are bad in themselves of course....

But Jesus says remain or abide in Him.

I love this passage.

For those of us who are born again Christians, who have received the Spirit of God.

This reminds us that the purpose of our lives are to bring Him, Jesus, glory.

By our lives bearing 'much fruit' as it says in v8.

And as we follow him, as we stay connected with Him, he will take us through a process where by He will prune us.

That will involve cutting out some of the immature commitments we have made. Some of the activities that we neither have the time for or the inclination for. But we do them, because we want to please people. Or we don't like saying no... Or whatever it is...

And we will be pruned internally, whereby we allow God to deal with such things as our insecurities, the idols in our lives, our over reliance on possessions...

But the purpose is that we bear much fruit.

I want to leave you with a challenge...

If you are watching this and you are not a Christian. Then of course the challenge is to receive Christ into your life. Start living knowing the presence of God with you.

It is a relationship that brings ultimate meaning and purpose in life no matter what we do.

If you are watching this and you are a born again, Spirit filled Christian, then my challenge is this.

Why don't you, at some point each day this week. Pause and acknowledge, just acknowledge the presence of Jesus is with you.

It could be just before you enter the office... not that we go to offices anymore!

It could be just before you enter the supermarket, the gym, the shop, the pub, the school playground...

Just acknowledge that Jesus' presence, His hidden life is with you.

Because, I think it is easy to forget just who we are carrying with us.

And I'd be interested to hear what or if it made any difference to your week. Amen.