



‘Live a life of love’

Ephesians, chapter 5 verse 2

## Last Sunday before Lent

### A Short Reflective Service of Prayer for those at home

Lord God, whose very nature is love,  
whose Son, Jesus Christ,  
humbled himself to become like us,  
whose life and death brings hope and reconciliation to all mankind  
We thank for our many blessings  
and we bless your holy name. AMEN

### A Sentence from the Old Testament

‘You shall eat the fruit of your labours’ *Psalms 128*

### A Reading from the New Testament

And now I will show you the most excellent way.  
If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love,  
I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy  
and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith  
that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.  
If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames,  
but have not love, I gain nothing.  
Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.  
It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of  
wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects,  
always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never ends.  
But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease;  
as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy  
only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.  
When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child;  
when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways; for now we see in a mirror,  
dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part;  
then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.  
Of these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.

*1 Corinthians, Chapter 13*

Light your own Candle  
(please ensure this is done safely)

*Pause for a moment of quiet*

## Thought for the Day

Over the past few weeks we have talked about the importance of 'Faith and Hope' for Christians, today we turn to the third strand of St Paul's well known letter to the Corinthian Church which adds the central importance of 'Love' to the wellbeing of our Christian character and lives.

Today, many will be thinking about love as February 14<sup>th</sup> marks the selfless love of St Valentine. Although the origins of this saint have become a little blurred, the sentiment of human love is a powerful romantic agent that stimulates many to express their love for one another openly and sometimes creatively. Best laid plans of course don't always work out!

I love the story of the Billionaire who sought to find a Beau for his daughter on Valentine's Day. Any prospective young man would need courage to win the hand of his daughter for the Billionaire had filled his swimming pool with lots of hungry crocodiles. He set out his challenge – 'The first young man to swim from one side of the pool to the other would win the hand of his daughter.'

Suddenly there was a 'splash', all eyes turned to see one young man swimming for all his worth across the pool. He went faster than perhaps an Olympic swimmer, on reaching the other side safely the Billionaire greeted the young man. 'Son,' he said, 'You must have a great love for my little girl, can I offer you her hand in marriage?' Nooooo, replied the young man.

'Well what do you want son, money, a share in my oil fields?' Nooooo Sir, 'Then what do you want? The Billionaire enquired, the young man quickly said, 'The only thing I want is the name of the person who pushed me in the swimming pool full of crocodiles!!'

At the heart of this story lies a simple truth, no one can push you into 'love' but one thing for sure, to love or to be loved is a most precious gift or experience; without love, St Paul says, 'we are nothing.'

When St Paul wrote this letter he saw around him what resembled a 'church' but something was missing. In setting out his thoughts he began by affirming some of the wonderful gifts that are manifest among the people of God... faith that can move a mountain, the wisdom and insight to solve all mysteries, charity that was exemplary and yet something was missing. What he saw were some incredible people but the impression etched into his mind was that they did not love each other!

Jesus had always commanded his followers to 'love' one another as he had shown love for us. Just ponder what Paul was trying to say, ask yourself, what was the love that Jesus demonstrated really like?

To help, Paul quantifies the nature of 'True love.' its qualities bring forth perfection, they enrich the soul and reveal though personality a life which demonstrates patience, kindness, humility, Love is never rude or self-seeking, not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs, rejoices in truth and shuns all evil.

Love protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres and importantly never fails the one loved!

To choose to love is a costly commitment, consider the extent of Jesus' love for you – Jesus chose to believe your soul was more important than his blood. He was nailed to a cross and left to die not for any self-gain but so that the world might witness the power of true sacrificial love, a love so characteristic of Godliness, a love so profound that it can transform even the hardest of heart if truly embraced.

Though we may have heard this message many times, spelling out the costly demands of love, it is one we need to work at; remember, no one 'pushed' Jesus to die for what he believed in.

Valentine's Day may stimulate romantic thoughts about love, but for those who choose to marry remember, a box full of anniversary cards stored in a cupboard may look pretty impressive but the real fruit of a marriage is when two lives are transformed because they share the one heart beat that is shaped out of true love.

Don't be fooled by outward appearances, and don't be fooled into thinking we can pull the wool over God's eyes. The 'Church' may be a place where great faith is found, a place where hope is taught but its greatest gift must be to love as Christ showed his love for us.

*Pause for a moment of quiet to reflect -*

God of our growing  
Forgive our foolish ways,  
Have mercy upon us  
and keep us safely in your sight. AMEN

### **A Call to Prayer**

Let us pray for the world, the Church and each other

### **Prayers for the World**

Who will we pray for today? Let us name them.

*(Silently name those we pray for or the issues in the world that concern us today)*

O Lord, hear our prayer.

Have mercy on your people O God  
In this new and challenging world that stands before us.

Bring healing and wholeness to people and nations,  
and have pity on those suffering in their isolation.

Strengthen all who are fearful of disease and death,  
bring them to a new hope in Christ.

Hear the cry of those who lament the passing of loved ones,  
grant them your peace and surround them with your presence.

Give rest to the departed  
and bring them, with your saints, to glory everlasting.

We commend the world to you for which Christ died,  
lead us in the pathways of truth and grant us your wisdom O God,  
now and forever more, AMEN.

### **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



### Closing Words

May God, who is the source of life  
touch us with his gentleness  
be the rock beneath our feet  
and the source of our love for each other  
now and forever more.  
AMEN