

Call to worship

Jesus says, 'love your enemies'
Jesus says, 'turn the other cheek'
Jesus says, 'give to everyone who asks'
Treat others as you would like them to treat you.
This doormat faith seems too much to bear
in a world where the bullies always seem to win

Jesus says, catch your enemies out with love
Jesus says, break the laws that treat people badly
Jesus says, turning the cheek shows I'm your equal
This rebellious faith seems too hard to do
in a world where bullies are loved back by those they bully
But this is heaven's revolution and we are called to participate.
Come let us worship this revolutionary God,
who turns the world upside down and teaches us all to love!

Hymn Christian Love – Tune Ode to Joy

Christian love is not romantic, not soft-focussed, twee or sweet,
Christian love's not 'likes', nor dating, far more real than text or tweet.
Christian love means life-long struggle; lived-out kindness ev'rywhere.
Christian love must echo Jesus: selfless, soulful, steeped in prayer.

Christian love respects the other, seeks to understand, not judge;
takes delight in mutual learning doesn't force and doesn't fudge.
Christian love's an arduous journey, finding self by giving all;
serving, sharing, helping, caring; full response to Jesus' call.

Christian love cries out for justice wheresoever it's denied;
joins the struggle, makes the protest, stays the course, eyes open wide.
Christian love rejects what's racist, sexist, ageist, prejudiced,
turns against each nurtured bias, learning daily to resist.

Christian love is learned from Jesus, walks his way and bears his cross;
self-surrenders, like our Saviour; gains much more than what is lost.
Christian love is so persistent, it outlasts all other things;
by its hope, its faith, its struggle, it's the song all heaven sings!

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Talk

Trust in God
The Golden Rule

Offertory

Holy One, all that we have comes from you. Accept our gifts for your work in the world,
and to you be the glory and praise always. **Amen**

Hymn Seek ye first R&S 512

Seek ye first the kingdom of God
And his righteousness;
And all these things shall be added unto you,
Allelu, alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia, Alleluia, allelu, alleluia

Christ Church, 20 Feb. 2022. Written service circulated to all

Ask, and it shall be given unto you,
Seek, and ye shall find.
Knock, and the door shall be opened unto you,
Allelu, alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia, Alleluia, allelu, alleluia.

We shall not live by bread alone,
But by every word
That proceeds from the mouth of the Lord,
Allelu, alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia, Alleluia, allelu, alleluia.

Children leave for Sunday Club. Say the Grace (if there are children going out)

Opening Prayer

God of abundant and steadfast love,
we gather to worship and praise you.
There is no way we as humans can measure the immensity of God's love
because it is as vast as the immeasurable heavens;
God's love is deeper than the deepest seas;
and all of creation cannot contain all the love
that flows so faithfully and generously from God's heart of grace.
All-loving and all-merciful God,
help us today to accept the searching light of God's love into our lives,
so that with honest hearts, we may experience God's just peace
surrounding and upholding us in our daily struggles in faithfulness.
Help us to always rely on your eternal promises,
so that claiming these promises as our very own,
we may daily grow in love and in our commitment
to our Holy and Righteous God, and seek to serve God all our days. Amen.

Bible readings: **Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40**
 Luke 6:27-38

Both of today's readings are very hard – not the words, the words are quite easy – but what we are asked to do. The first from Psalm 37 tells us not to worry and that wrongdoers will get their comeuppance, yet we all know that people who do wrong, who lie and break the rules, who bully others or do their jobs really badly and endanger others, rarely get what is coming to them. And while the pandemic seems to be easing off now, there is still plenty to worry about if you watch or listen to the news, and there is always the worry that case rates will go up again, or we will get another different variant, especially as the government is planning to remove all restrictions, more to make itself popular than because anything scientific suggests that is a good idea! I won't mention any of the long list of things from the news that we could worry about as we're supposed to put our trust in God and not worry, and I'm sure you can think of plenty of things without me listing them! Even away from the news and media, there are many things to worry about – there seem to be many people in our congregation and at Bridgwater Drive, struggling with illness at the moment, with end of life issues or with bereavement. And trusting in God at those times can be hard – when it

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seems like the diagnosis is too much to bear, or the pain will never get any less, but I know from personal experience that I felt the presence of God more while my mum was dying than at any other time in my life. And many people say that it is at just such difficult times that they rely on and trust in God the most. When things are so bad, what is left but to trust in God?

In our Gospel reading from Luke, we are told to love our enemies, treat others as we would like them to treat us – what is known as the Golden Rule – and we are told to turn the other cheek – none of which is easy. This follows on from last week's reading in which Jesus outlines a shorter version of the beatitudes – those who are blessed, and balances it with those who are not blessed but should take warning. To re-cap:

Blessed are the poor – not the poor in spirit, but only poor, so this could be interpreted as those without the things they need in life like homes and clothes.

Blessed are those who are hungry – again, not those who hunger for justice as in the longer version in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, but simply those who are hungry which could be for food or possessions, love or justice, compassion or companionship, spiritual hunger – there are many ways to be hungry.

Blessed are those who weep – is what Luke says, rather than Matthew's 'mourn', but both weeping and mourning come to everyone at some point in their lives, so this one really speaks to everyone.

And finally, blessed are those who are hated or rejected on account of following Jesus. Instead of 4 more blessings, Luke then gives us 4 woes, or warnings, which are the opposites of the 4 blessings: to the rich, to those who have plenty now, to those who are laughing now, rather than weeping, and to those who are praised by all – people with prestige or high social standing. These blessings and woes describe a world that reverses almost everything we know of how things work. It completely overturns the status quo – it is not the rich and distinguished who are blessed in God's kingdom, but the poor and hungry, the widows and orphans, those most excluded from society. And in today's verses Jesus continues with that overturning of the world we know, a world where the bullies and the rich and powerful always seem to win.

After warning those who don't follow God's ways what life will be like for them, Jesus goes on to describe how those who are in a relationship with God, who trust God and follow Jesus, are called to live; how we should behave. Jesus will bring about a very different world, God's world and we have a part to play in that. God will level the playing field no matter what rules we have established to create and protect our positions, power and social standing. The thriving of all creatures in God's world requires a completely different way of

doing things from those humans have put in place. Jesus lists commands that describe behaviour for those of us still listening. The very first command, 'love', is followed by some quite concrete examples – **love** your enemies, not just your family and friends, even the bad people love those they like - **do** good; don't just think well of people you don't like or don't agree with, but do good too. **Pray** for, **bless**, **give**, and **do** to others as you would have them do to you. Jesus then goes on with more actions – things we should not do – do not judge or condemn. Forgive and you will be forgiven. And then Jesus appears to give us a cocktail recipe (at least in the NRSV) – 'a good measure, pressed down, shaken [not stirred] together, running over, will be put in your lap, for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.'

Those who follow Jesus are to live and act as God lives and acts - mercifully and being generous beyond expectation, beyond comprehension. Those who don't follow Jesus, love, lend, and do good but only in the expectation of receiving something in return. They don't love their enemies, but only others like them, their like-minded friends. But for us as disciples, followers of Jesus, for people who trust God, loving, lending, and doing good are all about generosity that does not draw boundaries based on other people's responses. We are to love and do good to all, even our enemies and those who curse and abuse us. The golden rule – do to others as you would have them do to you - is insufficient for those in a relationship with God, those who trust God. Our own wishes for how we want to be treated are no measure for how we treat others. God's mercy and love is to be the measure for our behaviour. So take up your cocktail shaker and mix up a life of service like Jesus' – a good measure of love, plenty of doing, a splash of prayer, pressed down with giving and shaken together until your cup runs over with the love and mercy of God!

Hymn Put peace into each other's hands R&S 635

Fred Kaan © Stainer & Bell Ltd

Put peace into each other's hands
and like a treasure hold it;
protect it like a candle flame,
with tenderness enfold it.

Put peace into each other's hands
with loving expectation;
be gentle in your words and ways,
in touch with God's creation.

Put peace into each other's hands,
like bread we break for sharing;

look people warmly in the eye:
our life is meant for caring.

As at communion, shape your hands
into a waiting cradle;
the gift of Christ receive, revere,
united round the table.

Put Christ into each other's hands,
he is love's deepest measure;
in love make peace, give peace a chance
and share it like a treasure.

Lord's Supper

We remember, as we do at every communion service, the gift of the life and death of God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Come to this table, you who are beloved in Christ. Come, not because you must, but because you may.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Heavenly Father, we call upon you in Jesus' name.
We come with empty hands.
We have not been able to love our enemies.
As a rule we have never even seen them.
We have avoided them.
When we saw them, we felt only fear and anger, not love.

So we come to you, not as the children of your love,
but as the enemy of our enemies,
beseeching you for ourselves and all the others;

Bless those who curse you,
do good to those who hate you.
Forgive us for what we have failed to do for our enemies.

You lead us out of the constriction of fear
and out of the prison of hate,
into the wide space of freedom.
Let us see your sun,
which rises upon the evil and the good,
and rejoice in its warmth, together with our enemies. **Amen.**

By Jurgen Moltmann

Send your Holy Spirit upon this bread and wine,
and upon your people, that Christ may be with us,
and we may be ready to live for you
and do what you ask of us, today and every day to come. Amen

On the night when he was betrayed, Jesus took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way he took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Sharing of bread and wine

Prayer after communion

Holy One, you call us into a life that others have told us is easy, but it is not.
You challenge us to forgive, to love our enemies, to bless those who curse us.
We want the easy way, but You have given us the hard path.
Grant us the patience and endurance to journey with You,
to allow ourselves at times to stumble, to live into the hard way
so that we might fully experience Your love, grace and peace in this world,
by becoming a people full of love and grace and forgiving others.
In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen**

Prayers of intercession

Gracious God, we pray today for unity and equality and an end to discrimination and prejudice of all kind. Help us to truly remember that in Christ we are all one.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray today, for all those who go hungry and for the people who help them, through volunteering at foodbanks, by donating food and money, or by speaking out and raising awareness of issues.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for all those still affected by Covid-19 – those who have had to recently self-isolate or are isolating now; those in care-homes confined to their rooms because of cases; carers and NHS staff who are still worn out and trying to work on the backlog of waiting lists.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for world leaders and democratic systems. Let them not be abused and help us not to be overtaken by apathy and despair when it seems that democracy is flawed. Especially this week, we pray for – the situation in Ukraine and other places of conflict like Myanmar and Yemen that get forgotten while the media focus on Europe.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who feel lonely and sad, unable to see family or friends for whatever reason, and we think of those known to us who are isolating in preparation for medical treatment.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for all those who are ill and those who care for them; for those awaiting test results or treatment, for the dying and those who mourn. May your infinite love and grace surround them and bring them peace, in Jesus' name. **Amen**

Lord's Prayer

Hymn Longing for light Red folder 65

Longing for light, we wait in darkness
Longing for truth, we turn to You.
Make us Your own, Your holy people
Light for the world to see.

*Refrain: Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in Your church gathered today.*

Longing for peace, our world is troubled
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has pow'r to save us.
Make us your living voice.

Refrain:

Longing for food, many are hungry
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us Your bread, broken for others
Shared until all are fed.

Refrain:

Many the gifts, many the people,
Many the heart that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another
Making your kingdom come.

Refrain:

Bernadette Farrell

Blessing (inspired by Psalm 37)

Trust in God, and do what is good;
live with quiet confidence where God has placed you.
Delight in God's presence, and you will have all that your heart desires.
Commit everything you do to God - trust God completely and the Holy One will never let you down.
Be patient. Don't worry or get upset when things don't go well.
Instead, learn to rest in God's presence.
For those who trust in God will have everything they need.
And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. Amen