

# Christ Church URC Rayleigh

## Service

**Sunday 28 April 2024**

**Welcome:** Welcome to those of you who are with us this morning, either in person or online and welcome too to those who will be listening to the service during this week either on CD or through our Facebook page.

**Call to worship :** We come to worship God on this 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter and our call to worship is from the Gospel of St. John Ch 15 vv9 and 10. Jesus says "I love you just as the Father loves me; remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love"

So let us all come before God to sing his praise

Amen

### **Hymn: Word Folder No. 3**

1. All over the world the Spirit is moving,  
all over the world as the prophet said it would be;  
all over the world there's a mighty revelation  
of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.
2. All over His church God's spirit is moving,  
all over His church as the prophet said it would be;  
all over His church there's a mighty revelation  
of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.
3. Right here in this place the Spirit is moving,  
Right here in this place as the prophet said it would be;  
Right here in this place there's a mighty revelation  
Of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

### **Children Time**

A little later in the service the adults will be hearing about Jesus' commission to his disciples. But actually this commission to do as Jesus had done, applies to every Christian irrespective of age. Now you might think that it is a bit ridiculous applying that to children, but not so. Let me tell you the story of two boys, I got to know through my neighbours in Leigh.

Both were of roughly the same age, about 13, if I remember correctly. One, called Alan (not his real name by the way) went to the local school while the other called Jacob had been pushed by his parents into going to Westcliff High School for Boys, where he was deeply unhappy, for a number of reasons which we do not need to know about this morning. Suffice it to say that he had no one whom he felt he could turn to and had found it very difficult to make friends in his school. This particular day he really was feeling down in the dumps and as he walked home from school all of a sudden, his bag split, and all its contents spilt on to the pavement.

Alan was also walking home from school, but instead of just walking past Jacob, he stopped to help to gather all the books etc. lying on the pavement. They got talking and they realized that they lived in the same street, not more than a couple of minutes from each other. Soon they were regularly walking home from school together and are still best friends today. Jacob had found a friend with whom he could share his problems and that made his life so much easier

So, what is this story saying to you? Do you know someone who is perhaps quiet and shy at school and is always left out of activities? Or perhaps you know someone who is sad and is finding it very difficult to talk to someone. Perhaps you could be like Alan and stop helping them instead of ignoring them. In the small act of giving help or offering friendship, you too are following what Jesus told the disciples to do.

## **Collection**

### **Hymn: Word Folder no 20** (sung twice)

Come on and celebrate!  
His gift of love, we will celebrate  
The Son of God who loved us  
And gave us life.  
We'll shout your praise, O King,  
You give us joy nothing else can bring  
We'll give to you our offering  
In celebration praise.

Come on and celebrate,  
celebrate,  
celebrate and sing,  
celebrate and sing to the King.  
Come on and celebrate,  
Celebrate,  
Celebrate and sing,  
Celebrate and sing to the King.

## **Prayer**

Loving God you are our loving Heavenly Father, we come to you to acknowledge that we have not always been good – or well behaved. May you look over us like a loving shepherd looks after his sheep. Heavenly father when we do wrong correct us and forgive us, when we lose our way, may our Lord Jesus Christ show us the correct path for us to take and may your Holy Spirit support us when we feel overwhelmed by events and feel that we are losing control.

Now we say together the prayer Jesus taught us (modern version) which is on the screen or on the inside back pages of Rejoice & Sing:

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. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, power and the glory are yours now and forever. **Amen**

### **Blessing for the children**

**Reading (1):** Acts Ch 8v 26-40

**Talk** (PowerPoint – see second document)

Before I begin this presentation just a little background, in John 20, verses 19- 23, we have Jesus commissioning the disciples he says “even as my Father sent me, so I send you and of course earlier in Acts we have the arrival of the Holy Spirit, which lands on all of the disciples. The story we are about to see in here shows how Philip did a Jesus commanded him. So let us see what happens!

### **Presentation**

So now we have heard about Philip and the Ethiopian official, maybe we should look beyond the actual story. For it is an illustration of the dramatic changes Christianity was making. The leaders in Jerusalem though the Jesus was the Messiah for the Jewish people and so he was, but this story illustrates that he was also the Messiah for non-Jews something that had not even been contemplated before. Indeed, tradition has it that the eunuch went home and evangelized Ethiopia, and I think we can be sure that as he went on his way rejoicing, he would not be able to keep it to himself.

### **Hymn: Word Folder no 34**

1) Holy Spirit, living breathe of God, breathe new life into my willing soul Bring the presence of the risen Lord to renew my heart and make me whole. Cause your word to come alive in me give me faith for what I cannot see; Give me passion for your purity; Holy Spirit breathe new life in me.	2) Holy Spirit, come abide within, may your joy be seen in all I do. Love enough to cover every sin in each thought and deed and attitude: Kindness to the greatest and the least, gentleness that shows the path of peace. Turn my strivings into works of grace breathe of God show Christ in all I do.
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3) Holy Spirit, from creation's birth,  
giving life to all that God has made,  
Show your power once again on earth,  
Cause your church to hunger for your ways.  
May the fragrance of your prayers arise;  
Lead us on the road to sacrifice,  
That in unity the face of Christ  
May be clear for all to see.

## **Reading (2) John Ch 15 vv 1-8 (Jim Noakes)**

### **Talk**

So far this morning we have been considering how Jesus' commissioning words to the disciples could affect young people and then looked at an example of how one of the disciples followed those words. Now I want to take a deeper look at what perhaps Jesus expected of not only his disciples but us.

It might seem strange that he is using the picture of a vine, to explain his rationale. However, as always, Jesus knew what he was doing. The vine was grown all over Palestine and as vineyard owners even today will tell you, a lot of work is required to get the best yields. Wherever vines are grown, whether against trellises, or supported by low forked sticks or even around cottage doors, it is essential to carefully prepare the soil. Vines grow luxuriantly and need to be cut back to conserve its life and energy. It has two kinds of branches, ones that bear fruit and ones that do not, and it is the ones that do not bear fruit that have to be ruthlessly pruned back. Otherwise, the owner of the vine could be faced with the unfruitful branches draining the life out of the fruitful ones resulting in a low yield crop. The wood of a vine is practically useless it could not be taken to the Temple as an offering to be burnt on the altar fires. All it was fit for was to make a bonfire and destroy it.

Jesus says that his followers are like that. Some are lovely fruit bearing branches of himself, whilst others are useless because they bear no fruit. Who was Jesus thinking of when he spoke, He could have been thinking of the Jews. In Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, were the Jews not pictured as branches of God's vine? However, the Jews refused to listen to him and refused to accept Him, so they were like fruitless branches. He perhaps was thinking more generally, for example thinking of Christians whose faith consisted of profession without practice. In other words, they were also fruitless branches – all leaves but no fruit. Or again he could have been thinking of Christians who heard the message, accepted it but fell away, renouncing their beliefs becoming traitors to the Master they had once pledged to serve.

So, then there are three ways in which we can be useless branches. Firstly, we can refuse to listen to him at all. Secondly we can listen to him and render him lip

service, that is not supported by deeds. Finally we can accept him as Master, but the abandon Him when things become difficult or our faith gets in the way of what we want to do and it is clear that the first principle of the New Testament is that uselessness invites disaster and the fruitless branch is on the way to destruction.

It is obvious from this passage, that only the fruitful branches of Jesus the vine are any good, so what do we need to do to become fruitful branches? Very simply accept Him as our Lord and Saviour, accepting his words as our truths and never rejecting him, no matter how hard the way we are travelling becomes. Then and only then can we following the commissioning words that Jesus spoke to his disciples – “even as my Father sent me, so I send you” and truly become followers of Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

### **Hymn: Word Folder No 37**

I am a new creation,  
No more in condemnation,  
Here in the grace of God I stand.  
My heart is overflowing,  
My love just keeps on growing,  
Here in the grace of God I stand.

And I will praise you Lord,  
Yes, I will praise you Lord,  
and I will sing of all that you have done.  
A joy that knows no limit  
A lightness in my spirit  
here in the grace of God I stand.

**Meditation :** Handel’s Messiah CD 2 track 51 “But thanks be to God”

### **Prayers of intercession: Sue Deane**

#### **Hymn: Word Folder No. 41**

1 I the lord of sea and sky,  
I have heard my people cry;  
all who dwell in dark and sin  
My hand will save.  
I, who made the stars of night,  
I will make the darkness bright.  
I will speak My word to them.  
Whom shall I send?

*Chorus*

2 I the Lord of snow and rain,  
I have borne my people’s pain;  
I have wept for love of them -  
they turn away.  
I will break their hearts of stone,  
Give them hearts for love alone;  
I will speak my word to them.  
Whom shall I send?

*Chorus*

*Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?  
I have heard you calling in the night  
I will go, Lord, if you lead me;  
I will hold your people in my heart*

3 I the Lord of wind and flame,  
I will tend the poor and lame,  
I will set a feast for them –  
My hand will save.  
Finest bread I will provide  
till their hearts are satisfied;  
I will give My life to them.  
Whom shall I send?  
*Chorus*

### **Blessing**

Our service is over, sustained by the Holy Spirit go out from here to love and serve the Lord when opportunities arise May God love you, may his Son, Jesus Christ guide you and His Holy Spirit strengthen and sustain you when you feel alone and lost.

The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

**Amen**

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