



The **Methodist** Church

Nottingham North East Circuit - Sunday 11TH Feb 2024

This short act of worship, based on the service which would have been held at Church today, has been prepared for you by Rev John Wiseman, to use at home. If you are well enough, why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship

Let's begin by singing a hymn that sums up Paul's feeling having experienced the living and risen Christ. STF489

All I once held dear, built my life upon
All this world reveres, and wars to own
All I once thought gain I have counted loss
Spent and worthless now, compared to this

*Knowing you, Jesus
Knowing you, there is no greater thing
You're my all, you're the best
You're my joy, my righteousness
And I love you, Lord*

Now my heart's desire is to know you more
To be found in you and known as yours
To possess by faith what I could not earn
All-surpassing gift of righteousness

Oh, to know the power of your risen life
And to know You in Your sufferings
To become like you in your death, my Lord
So with you to live and never die

Graham Kendrick
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Opening prayer

God of truth and life and grace, we gather together in this all too familiar way, in our living rooms, kitchens or conservatories, to unite with our brothers and sisters in and through the faith we share.

We gather to offer you our praise and worship, to listen to your living word, to raise our voices in song, to receive a message to take with us into the coming week, to share with you in prayer our concerns and our celebrations.

When we stumbled around in darkness, you brought light. When we were deafened by noise, you brought silence. When we were overwhelmed by chaos, you brought peace.

When we felt left out, you offered a welcome. When we felt unworthy, you told us that we are loved.

Forgive us that we often do not reciprocate that love by how we act with others, by how we speak to others, even by what we think about others.

Pause in silence...

Allow us to hear once more your words of grace, telling us that all those things have been forgiven.

Be with us in this act of worship, whether alone or gathered together with family or friend. And accept this our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen

Today's reading: 1 Corinthians 9:16-23

¹⁶ If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe betide me if I do not

proclaim the gospel! ¹⁷ For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. ¹⁸ What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel.

¹⁹ For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. ²⁰ To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. ²¹ To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I might by any means save some. ²³ I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

Let's sing/ read another hymn together

What gift of grace is Jesus my redeemer
There is no more for heaven now to give
He is my joy, my righteousness, and
freedom
My steadfast love, my deep and boundless
peace
To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
For my life is wholly bound to His
Oh how strange and divine, I can sing, "All is
mine"
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

The night is dark but I am not forsaken
For by my side, the Saviour He will stay
I labour on in weakness and rejoicing
For in my need, His power is displayed

To this I hold, my Shepherd will defend me
Through the deepest valley He will lead
Oh the night has been won, and I shall
overcome

Yet not I, but through Christ in me

No fate I dread, I know I am forgiven
The future sure, the price it has been paid
For Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon
And He was raised to overthrow the grave

To this I hold, my sin has been defeated
Jesus now and ever is my plea
Oh the chains are released, I can sing, "I am
free"

Yet not I, but through Christ in me

With every breath I long to follow Jesus
For He has said that He will bring me home
And day by day I know He will renew me
Until I stand with joy before the throne

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
All the glory evermore to Him
When the race is complete, still my lips
shall repeat

Yet not I, but through Christ in me

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
All the glory evermore to Him
When the race is complete, still my lips
shall repeat

Yet not I, but through Christ in me

When the race is complete, still my lips
shall repeat

Yet not I, but through Christ in me

Yet not I, but through Christ in me

Yet not I, but through Christ in me

Songwriters: Michael Farren / Rich Thompson / Jonny Robinson © Farren
Love And War Publishing, Integrity's Alleluia! Music, Cityalight Music

Today's message

Paul is perhaps best known for three things. His encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Rd. His three or was it four missionary journeys around the Mediterranean. And his for letters that make up $\frac{3}{4}$ of the NT, all written before a single word of the gospels were written.

Letter that were written for a variety of reasons, to a variety of individuals, specific churches, or as a round robin to a group of churches. Written to answer questions. Written to explain. Written to encourage and extol. Written to condemn and criticize.

As so as we pick up those letters some 2,000 years after they were written, the challenge is rooting the content of the message we deliver in the contexts of these ancient correspondences and communities.

We need to ask was Paul writing about an issue specific to one church or generally to a universal situation the early church was encountering?

Paul wrote in order to respond to particular moments in the lives of these early churches, so let's start by thinking about Corinth itself. It was situated at a major crossroads of multiple trade routes. It was incredibly cosmopolitan city made up of a transient, very mixed population from all levels of society. It was also a place of great immorality; to 'corinthianise' was to live as someone with a very loose moral compass.

Is it any wonder that the church at Corinth was a mess. Scholars far cleverer than me have suggested there are 15 distinguishable problems that Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians. Problems that could be gathered into 4 main areas.

- Basic failure in relating to one another in love.
- Dramatic failure of the local church leaders to act considerately in the face of their competition for status and influence.
- Arrogant and differing theological reasoning.
- Tensions arising from the pressures that Paul's teaching about sex placed on his converts.

Each of these problems would have been bad enough, but when they were all present together, the combination was toxic. Can you just imagine the church councils in Corinth!!!

Now as a minister going around the circuit it is possible that I can encounter 15 different congregations and whilst I might deliver the same overall message to each one, the construction, the delivery, the tone of that message will be different.

In January for example I did five covenant services in five different churches, each one of them different in their approach and delivery, hopefully to suit each particular congregation.

For Paul, this devout Jew, this Pharisee of the Pharisees, this man who has been taught by some of the very best Jewish religious teachers, he had to find a way to deliver the good news to an enormous spectrum of people. People who in the main did not share his religious background.

Paul had to adapt his approach. He had to meet people where they were. He had to find common ground. He was to become different things to different people. He was in essence something that Boy George and

Culture Club sang about 2000 years later.
Paul was a.... let's sing together.

'Karma Karma Karma Karma Karma
Chameleon'

To Jewish audience who had a grasp of the faith story, the rituals, the law, the promises of God, the long-awaited need of a Messiah...Paul is a Jew.

To a Gentile audience who know nothing of those things... Paul is a Gentile. To people hung up with the law, Paul adapts and speaks to them accordingly.

To those who are new or indeed do not possess a faith, he changes his approach in order to connect with them and guide them to the fullness of life in Christ.

Whoever he is dealing with Paul seeks to know them, seeks to understand them, seeks to try to see the world through their eyes, attempt to see the ways they think and understand things and then adapts his customs, his approach and message accordingly just like a chameleon changes its colour to adapt to its surroundings / context

But that did not mean that Paul abandoned 'all that he held dear' (think back to our first hymn today) just so that he could win over a new audience.

No....Christ, Christ crucified and Christ risen again remained the steadfast rock on which his faith was based, one realised through that Damascus road experience and the decade or so of head scratching, thinking and reflecting on what that meant before Paul was ready to take his first ever steps to being an apostle to the Gentiles. A move and a mission that would cause him to go as far outside his comfort zone as its possible to get. And yet go he does.

John Wesley talked about his heart being strangely warmed during his Aldersgate experience...Paul isn't just strangely warmed... he is on fire about the Gospel. His love for Jesus animates everything he does. He simply cannot stop from telling others about the love of God. And he is willing to try to be all things to all people in order to do so.

The questions for us is do we have the same passion, the same desire, the same passion, the same fire to share the good news to others?

Can we adapt how approach so that that message is accessible, relevant and inviting to those who already know a lot, to those who know a little and to those who know next to nothing? That could be a church group, a gathering of families at a holiday event, a coffee morning or a care home.

Can we try to be all things to all people and yet still retain the core of the faith we share as we share it with others?

How can we like be like Paul and become a chameleon for Christ wherever we go and whoever we encounter. Amen

Prayers of Intercessions

We pray for the issues that have dominated our news headlines during this past week.

We pray for calmness to descend upon the political landscape in the areas of the world where there is conflict.

We think of all those, including King Charles, who are undergoing medical treatment, and also for those caring / supporting them.

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We pray for victims of knife crime and
violence on the streets of our cities, towns
and villages.

We pray for those who are struggling with
the cost of living

We pray for those who are feeling isolated
and trapped because of these cold winter
days

We join together to say the words of the
Lord's prayer...Our Father.....

**Let us conclude this act of worship by
singing / reading together**

Go forth and tell!
O Church of God, awake!
God's saving news to all the nations take.
Proclaim Christ Jesus, Saviour Lord and
King,
That all the world his worthy praise may
sing.

Go forth and tell!
God's love embraces all;
He will in grace respond to all who call.
How shall they call if they have never heard
The gracious invitation of his word?

Go forth and tell
Where still the darkness lies,
In wealth or want, the sinner surely dies:
Give us, O Lord, concern for heart and
mind,
A love like yours which cares for
humankind.

Go forth and tell!
The doors are open wide:
Share God's good gifts -- let no one be
denied.
Live out your life as Christ your Lord shall
choose;
Your ransomed powers for his sole glory
use.

Go forth and tell!
O Church of God arise!
Go in the strength which Christ your Lord
supplies.
Go till all the nations his great name adore
And serve him, Lord and King, for ever
more.

A blessing...

*Go into this week to be a chameleon for
Christ, sharing the good news with all those
that you meet, whenever you find yourself.
Amen*