

ORDER OF SERVICE

Sunday 24 January 2021

Welcome & Notices
Session Clerk: Keith Ferres

Prayer of Invocation

Hymn 532 (R)
Turn your eyes upon Jesus

Young at Heart
Christine Bradbeer

Bible Reading: John 3:31-38
Morag Zwartz

Hymn 596 (R)
O Love that will not let me go

Sermon
LOVE *One Another*

Prayers of Intercession
and
The Lord's Prayer

Hymn 422
Jesus the very thought of Thee

Benediction
Threefold Amen

NOTICES

24 January 2021

Website: www.blackburnpc.org.au

Wednesday 3 February 1.30 pm Prayer Meeting.
Sunday 7 February 11 am Divine Worship. All Welcome,
Covid safe practices.

For your prayers this week:

Congregational member: Keith Ferres



Also please pray for
patience and areas of home service for
Chris and Julie DEAN who are hoping
to minister in East Timor with CMS, but
are still awaiting an international flight.



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GARDENIA ST.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

BLACKBURN

24 January 2021



This is
My Commandment,
that you
Love

ONE ANOTHER

even as I have
Loved You.

JOHN 15:12



WELCOMES

YOU!



The human rights situation continued to be marked by a systematic crackdown on dissent. The justice system remained plagued by unfair trials and torture and other ill-treatment in detention. China still classified information on its extensive use of the death penalty as a state secret.

Amnesty International

Privacy in China is no longer guaranteed. An increase in surveillance and restriction of personal confidentiality have severely constrained the freedom of Christians. The Communist Party has taken control of all religious matters in the country, and churches are monitored, raided and shut down.

Publicly expressing Christian views can result in interrogation, loss of property or imprisonment. Christian leaders are increasingly detained at police stations, while elderly Christians can have their government assistance taken away for professing their faith.

There has also been an increase in raids and harassment in the past year. Thousands of churches have been damaged or destroyed in a campaign that has spread to almost every region of the country. Crosses have also been removed from churches and online Bible sales have been restricted.

Conversion to Christianity is seen as a betrayal of the family and local village within Buddhist and Islamic communities. A convert is seen as a disgrace and faces isolation within their community. They may even be attacked. Meeting with other Christians is nearly impossible.

Open Doors Australia

LOVE *One Another*

Sermon Notes

Today we begin a short series of reflections on the phrase "one another" as found in the New Testament.

This is two words in English, but it's only one word in Greek: ἀλλήλων (*ah-LAY-loan*). It's used 100 times in 94 New Testament verses. Don't worry there won't be a 100 sermons!

Of those 100 verses 47 give instructions to the church, so we are given some guidelines on how we should measure up as a Christian church.

I thought we should begin with Jesus' message in John 13 and 14, the command to his disciples to "love one another".

St Paul is on the same page when he encourages the Corinthians to 'put love first' (1 Cor.14:1).

1. If love is the answer, *what was the question?*

Knowing the answer suggests the world's problems have a simple solution. What problems? Well, domestic violence, slavery, cruelty, injustice, racial prejudice, pollution, war and greed to start with; if the answer to such complex questions is so simple and so obvious to so many people, why do such problems persist?

There are two points to note: (i) perhaps we have misunderstood the meaning of the word "love", or (ii) perhaps we haven't implemented "love" as an option. Let's delve a little deeper...

2. Love misunderstood? Have we been faking love?

Poets write about love and even deign to measure it. See EB Browning Sonnet 43 *How do I love thee? Let me count the ways...*

Love has a range of meanings as Wikipedia explains. The article, of over 7000 words, begins:

Love encompasses a range of strong and positive emotional and mental states, from the most sublime virtue or good habit, the deepest interpersonal affection, to the simplest pleasure. An example of this range of meanings is that the love of a mother differs from the love of a spouse, which differs from the love of food. Most commonly, love refers to a feeling of strong attraction and emotional attachment.

How does one prioritise one love over another?

It's pretty clear that one should love a parent more than a hamburger, but even the questions children ask are more complex. "Grandma, which of your grandchildren do you love the most?"

I ask myself "How do I rate my love for the refugee who has spent ten years in offshore detention, after reading about care of neighbour in Luke 10?"

Have we reduced love to satisfying our emotional pleasure?

Do we prioritise our own needs and wants over others? Does FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) influence our ability to share?

Do we really believe that loving is about giving?

3. Loving as giving - Love untried?

From the outset it is clear to John that this kind of love is self-giving (John 3:16).

At our best we recognise self-giving love wherever we see it.

But Jesus has made it obligatory for his disciples. As he approached the "hour" of his own self-giving he commands his disciples to "love one another (ἀλλήλων) as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

They will not find the strength to do this in and of themselves. They will need to rely upon and receive the Holy Spirit who will guide and help them (John 14:15,16 see also John 20:22).

The temptation to prioritise our own interests is always present within us. As it was difficult for the first disciples, so it will be for us.

The Jewish people knew from ancient times that love comes first for it is written "Love the Lord Your God with all your heart soul, mind and strength", and "love your neighbour as yourself".

To do this we must first be captivated by Christ's love. Our loving of one another must be our response to His love for us (1 John 4:19).

We need wisdom to "pursue what is good for one another and for everyone else" (1 Thessalonians 5:15).

4. Love for Christ's sake - Reason to love

The story is told of a very wealthy Sydney man who died. His funeral took place in St Peters Cathedral. Before the service began a mourner with a loud voice turned and said to the person behind him "How much did he leave?"

The reply from the man behind was equally audible: "All of it" he said.

There is not much that lasts forever, the grass withers, flowers fade, but the Word of God will endure.

That creative Word has come to us in Person to save us. Save us from our greed, our self-destructive selves.

He gave Himself for us. He was totally committed for you and for me. He came to rescue us from greed and futility by not only telling us, but by showing us what self-giving love would achieve.

"The gospel is this", says Tim Keller "We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope."

Dear friends, we have been loved beyond comprehension.

"His name for ever shall endure" as Psalm 72 celebrates!

How long will we be evasive about His call to love one another?

Let us ask the Holy Spirit to renew our love to Christ and grant us the courage to express it in love for one another!

Let us not renege on our commitment to follow Jesus, and His command to love one another.