

# 13<sup>th</sup> February 2022 – Morning Service

## What is love?

Rev Chris Watson

### Call to Worship

God stands with arms wide open, ready to welcome us home with an enormous hug.

God sits with hands held out, ready to listen to our troubles and sooth our worries.

God whoops with hands punching the sky, ready to delight and celebrate all that we can be.

So come, worship the God who first loved us.

### StF 6 – Father we love you

1) Father, we love you,

We worship and adore You,

Glorify Your name in

all the earth.

Glorify Your name,

Glorify Your name,

Glorify Your name in

all the earth

2) Jesus, we love You,

We worship and adore You,

Glorify Your name in

all the earth.

Glorify Your name,

Glorify Your name,

Glorify Your name in

all the earth

3) Spirit, we love You,

We worship and adore You,

Glorify Your name in

all the earth.

Glorify Your name,

Glorify Your name,

Glorify Your name in

all the earth

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### Prayers

Almighty God, we come to you in awe and joy to sing your praises, to pray to you in faith and to acknowledge your holiness, might and glory. You are the Word who brought life into being throughout the universe and yet you have blessed us with your love through the ages.

Generous God, we offer our heartfelt thanks to you for all you have done for us and given us throughout our lives: for people who have guided, inspired and loved us; for all that has enriched our lives and brought us happiness.

Gracious God you shared our mortal frame as Jesus Christ, not only so we could understand how you want us to live, but Jesus died at Calvary to redeem us from our sins. His resurrection offers everybody the gift of eternal life, not through any merit of our own, nor through our own works, but as your gift of grace.

Amazing God, your goodness overwhelms us as we reflect upon it, for our own shortcomings rise before us, reminding us how far short we have fallen from what you would have us be.

Merciful God, although Jesus showed us how we should live, we confess that our love for and service to you and our neighbours are frequently not wholehearted. As we turn away from what we know is wrong, we ask your forgiveness for the sins we have committed and for the good we have neglected to do.

Loving Lord, we believe you have heard and answered our prayer, pardoning us and calling us to follow you again. May the Holy Spirit help us to serve both you and our neighbours faithfully and warm-heartedly from now onwards, in the beautiful name of the risen Lord Jesus. **Amen**

### The Lord's Prayer

#### Our Father who art in Heaven

Lord God, you have asked us to call you our Father, for you are the Father of us all. We come as your children, knowing you long to hear us and to reveal more of yourself to us. We pray for those whom the word Father has been corrupted and spoilt by the experiences of imperfect earthly fathers. May they come to know your fatherhood as something good, something safe and secure. Enable us to grow in understanding of your fatherhood and never let us take our relationship with you for granted.

**Hallowed be thy name**

Lord God, we hallow your name; we call you holy, for that is what you are. We pray that every time we use your name it will be with an awareness of whom we are speaking about. May all people learn of your holiness and may we never take your name in vain.

**Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven**

Lord God we pray so glibly for your will to be done, for your kingdom to come. Help us to grasp what it means for your will to be done in each of our lives. Give us strength and courage as we commit ourselves to seeking and doing your will. May all Christians let your kingdom come in them.

**Give us this day our daily bread**

Lord God, we pray for all that we need to live well each day, food for body, mind and spirit. Help us to use wisely of the abundance we have. We pray for those for whom daily bread is a luxury. We remember their needs. We ask for vision and motivation to change a world where some die of hunger whilst others have much more than they could ever use.

**Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

Lord God, we confess our sins to you, the sins of omission and commission. Forgive us we pray, and restore us into a right relationship with you. We pray for those who find forgiving others an impossible task. Be patient with them, Lord and help us to be understanding. We ask that they will continue to seek your forgiveness, and that they will come to a place of healing and release, finding courage to forgive those who have hurt them. Lord, teach us how to forgive each other that we may live in harmony and be restored into a right relationship with each other.

**Lead us not into temptation**

Lord God we are so easily led, so easily tempted. Keep us close to you so that when temptation comes we might be able to resist it in the strength that Christ gives. We pray for those who have given into temptation and feel lost and devastated. May they find your loving presence and forgiveness and be able to move on from this time of trial. We pray for each other that we might not be misled by the apparent good in life but seek always to do your will in your way.

**For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen****Reading: Isaiah 43:1-7**

But now, this is what the Lord says – he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel:  
'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour;

I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. Since you are precious and honoured in my sight, and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, "Give them up!" and to the south, "Do not hold them back." Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth – everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.'

## StF 51 – Great is thy faithfulness

- 1) Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father  
There is no shadow of turning with thee  
Thou changest not, thy compassions  
they fail not;  
As thou hast been thou for ever wilt be:
- 2) Summer and winter, and springtime  
and harvest,  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To thy great faithfulness, mercy and love
- Ch) *Great is thy faithfulness!*  
*Great is thy faithfulness*  
*Morning by morning new mercies I see*  
*All I have needed thy hand hath provided*  
*Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.*
- 3) Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and bright hope  
for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

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## Reading: 1 Corinthians 13

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have 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 do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, 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 fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

## Sermon

### **What is love?**

Tomorrow is Valentines Day, a day to celebrate love, a day to spend money on flowers and cards, have you noticed how the prices of flowers suddenly go up? It can be a day of fun with a card from an unknown admirer or a day of disappointment when the expected card doesn't materialise. I can remember as a young girl dreading the question from classmates.....how many cards did you get, I'm sure that some sent themselves cards!!! All this in the name of Love.....

### **What is love?**

In English there is only one word which covers a multitude of different feelings and emotions. I could say I love someone and I love the way they make coffee, do they mean the same thing? I love my job, I love my husband, I would love a holiday, I would love to see.....entirely different emotions and feelings are involved. Whatever it is, everybody is looking for it, look at all the dating agencies there are, even ones for Christian singles, look at all the ads there are in the newspapers. An example goes like this;

“Genuine Male age 58, From Wolves, slim non smoker, own house and car, looking for a lady any age, for friendship, maybe more!” There's a whole page of like ads in the papers each week. We all need to love and be loved by someone or something other than ourselves.

The Bible has a lot to say about love. In fact it could be argued that the whole Bible is the telling of a love story, the love story of God for the world he created. It begins with the creation of a world and of people with whom God wanted to have a relationship. To begin with all was well, they walked together and talked in the garden, but then it fell apart and God went to plan B. From Genesis to Revelations we read how God showed himself, firstly to Moses and the Children of Israel, and then to the Gentiles, how time after time he showed his love and was rejected, just read the prophets! Finally he came as one of us to live as we do, to die as we do, so that we can live as he does. He put aside everything to become our sacrifice so we could find our way back to him.

### ***What is love?***

Particular passages in the Bible speak directly of love, our reading from Corinthians is one such passage, it is a popular reading at weddings and appropriately so. This letter is believed to have been written by Paul to the church in Corinth whilst he was in Ephesus and was in response to difficulties he had been asked to resolve in that church. Factions had arisen, there were problems around immorality, the Lord's supper, false teachings, to mention but a few. Socially the church was a mixed bunch from the well to do, to Jewish refugees and former thugs, not many were cultured or clever and there was a lack of Old Testament background, all the teachings were new and radical to them with no peg to hang things on. Corinth itself was on a trade route so was important for the spread of the gospel but it was also known for its problems. It had 12 Temples to different gods and goddesses, the one to Aphrodite goddess of love, specialised in religious prostitution which explains why there was a moral problem in this young church.

A couple of the temples summoned people to worship by ringing bells and gongs, which explains the opening verse of the chapter "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal". Paul is saying in this passage that you can be as spiritual as you like, you can be the most respected, the most dedicated upright member, of any church, but if you don't have love it's all empty and worthless. You can be someone who gives away lots of money to charities, who gives lots of their time and efforts to good causes but if you do it without love it has no meaning. Whatever you do if it is without love then you are doing it for the wrong reasons.

### ***What is love?***

Verses 4 – 7 say

*Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

Fantastic words. I fall short all the time; I am not always patient, not always kind, certainly at times I want my own way and I am resentful when I have to go or do something when I would like to do my own thing. I hope I am not the only one finding some of this difficult. Verse 8 says that Love never ends, everything else does but not love. The Bible tells us that God is Love personified, he is love. How do we know this?

He made us, look at the world he gave us to live in, not the problems, but the beauty of it all, look at the trees, the sky, grass and flowers. If you look you will see we are surrounded by beauty. When we turn away and go our own way God does not abandon us but waits for us to come back, he made a way back to himself for us. He became one of us, he died for each one of us as if we had been the only one needing him to do that.

So my question is what is love? Is it sentimentality shown in the buying of an annual card, is it spending money on flowers on chocolates? All very nice but if without real love all empty gestures. Jesus says in John 15 v 13 - Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. That is the answer, that is love.

### StF 443 – Come let us sing of a wonderful love

- 1) Come, let us sing of a wonderful love,  
Tender and true;  
Out of the heart of the Father above,  
Streaming to me and to you:  
Wonderful love  
Dwells in the heart of the Father above.
- 2) Jesus, the Saviour, this gospel to tell,  
Joyfully came;  
Came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,  
Sharing their sorrow and shame;  
Seeking the lost,  
Saving, redeeming at measureless cost.
- 3) Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;  
Why do they roam?  
Love only waits to forgive and forget;  
Home, weary wanderer, home!  
Wonderful love  
Dwells in the heart of the Father above.
- 4) Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love,  
Come and abide,  
Lifting my life, till it rises above  
Envy and falsehood and pride,  
Seeking to be  
Lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

Robert Walmsley CCL No. 515642

### Prayers

God who turns the world's values up-side-down, we think of our world where un-needed luxuries are sold with promises of increasing our feelings of self-worth. And we thank you that you love each one of us here and now, as we are.

God who turns the world's values up-side-down, we think of our world where beauty's secret, we are told, is hidden in a jar of face cream. And we thank you that beauty comes from within and is a reflection of your love for us.

God who turns the world's values up-side-down, we think of our world where love is shown by the size of the bouquet, or packaging of the chocolates. And we thank you that your love is shown in flesh and blood, community and stories.

God who turns the world's values up-side-down, forgive us when we look to the world to find our self-worth, forgive us when we value others, according to their looks, or their age, or their mobile phone. And we thank you that we receive your forgiveness and your love and hear you say to us, 'You are worth it'!

### StF 693 – Beauty for brokenness

- 1) Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair,  
Lord, in Your suffering world, this is our prayer.  
Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace,  
Sunrise to sunset Your kingdom increase.
- 2) Shelter for fragile lives, cures for their ills,  
Work for all people, trade for their skills.  
Land for the dispossessed, rights for the weak,  
Voices to plead the cause of those  
who can't speak.
- 3) Refuge from cruel wars, havens from fear,  
Cities for sanctuary freedoms to share.  
Peace to the killing fields, scorched earth  
to green,  
Christ for the bitterness, His cross for the pain.
- 4) Rest for the ravaged earth, oceans and streams,  
Plundered and poisoned, our future,  
our dreams.  
Lord, end our madness, carelessness, greed,  
Make us content with the things that we need.
- 5) Lighten our darkness, breathe on this flame  
Until Your justice burns brightly again;  
Until the nations learn of Your ways,  
Seek Your salvation and bring You their praise.

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**Blessing**

May the God who created chocolate and laughter, shared stories and friendships, go with us.  
May the God who embraced the vulnerable and healed the broken hearted, go with us.  
May the God who challenges injustice and encourages us to love our neighbour, go with us.  
And may we live our lives as Jesus lived, celebrating life in all its fullness.  
Amen.