



Prayers & Readings for this week

- ▶ We take a few moments each day to pray for one another. Prayer isn't just about doing all the talking; we also need to *listen* to what the Lord says to us as individuals - *and* as a church
- ▶ We remember those who have lost family members, some dear to our church
- ▶ We thank God for the marked increase in numbers of people in our nation – and beyond – now logging in to watch church services! A real irony – while churches are closed, the attendance (online) is up significantly! We give thanks to Him who still works in 'mysterious ways'!
- ▶ We pray for those, some far afield, who are attending our church online; may the Lord bless them and keep them in His care! Amen.

Monday Reading John 3:16–36
Pray for John & Ann Beattie & family

Tuesday Reading John 4:1–19
Pray for Vivienne and family

Wednesday Reading John 4:20–45
Pray for Mark, Joanne & Tom Bolton

Thursday Reading John 4:46–5:17
Pray for Audrey Bolton & family

Friday Reading John 5:18–47
Pray for Jack & Leah Bolton

Saturday Reading: Catch up
Pray for Robert Bond & Annette

**Sunday 24th
May** Reading John 6:1–21
Pray for Sandra Burke & family

Welcome to this, yet another edition of our Update! And if you are able to watch our digital services on Facebook or YouTube, then may the Lord bless you in our collective times of worship, too! I was wondering if I could write this page without mentioning 'you-know-what'! It's hard to remember the last time I read a new article that didn't have 'you-know-what' in the text or title.

We have a zoom 'virtual' church board meeting this Friday, so we are still functioning and overseeing everything from the little to the big things, and planning for the future as best we can. We want to say a big thank you for *your* support in giving to the church's work through online giving, standing order, or by cheque. I never cease to be amazed at people's generosity especially in such difficult times. Good stewardship of our time, possessions and talents is always going to be a priority in the Church of Christ. Thank you so much!

When we first started our Digital Services there was a 'novelty' feel to it and because it was all so new we naturally got a bit of a buzz from it. Part of our nature is to get used to things. In fact many of us don't like our peace and calm being disrupted. Christians believe that the Lord walks with us in all of life's ups and downs, and this 'you-know-what' situation is no different (it almost slipped out there!).

Each week in our virtual ministry we try to include people of all ages, backgrounds and gifts taking part. Naturally personal contacts, phone calls, texts, letters, cards and prayers arise too. I think also of some people perhaps on the periphery of what was our old *usual* Sunday service, who have now become a distinct and welcome part of who we now are at Brooklands. We can say, '***The Lord has done this and it is marvelous in our eyes***'. (Psalm 118: 23)

Moving forward then, we seek to encourage one another, share good things and especially stories that warm hearts and give hope to others. I suspect we will have many more stories to share face-to-face someday soon. For those who watch and follow us from a great distance – thank you for your thoughts and prayers. As I conclude writing these words, it's time for lunch so that means a sandwich, mug of strong tea and my usual catch up on the headlines; or maybe not! I feel a line from a Vera Lynn song coming on, '*We'll meet again...*'

Blessings then, until the next edition of our *Update*.



Message: Jesus my Commander **Readings:** Acts 17:22-31; John 14:15-21

INTRO: As you know I always like to have a focus verse, and it is verse 15. **“If you love me, you will obey what I command.” (John 14:15)**

The Ten Commandments have sometimes been referred to as the ‘Decalogue’, which literally means ‘The Ten Words’. Over the generations, the Ten Commandments have, for many people, often symbolized what it meant to be a Christian. So if you ‘obey’ these commands you are saved. *As a child*, I remember being taught to **memorise these words** in the Church of Ireland Sunday School I went to each week.

They certainly are a great guide to life but people tended to see them as **a list of Rules** rather than being indicative of a *Relationship* with God. What stood out for me was the emphasis on, **‘Thou shalt not!’**

We live in a society that does not subscribe to the Number One commandment - that we should have **‘no other gods** before’ Him. (It’s quite challenging, isn’t it!) We don’t have to travel far to encounter secularism, humanism, and atheism besides other religions. As Christians, though, we find ourselves living by principles which often conflict - *and greatly differ with* much in our nowadays worldly secular society. Though difficult in our multicultural society, it is **good to stand up for** what you believe **while respecting** the opinions of those who differ from us.

I think there is such a wonderful power available to us through the Holy Spirit because, with the coming of the New Testament, ***Love is our strength*** - and not the Law! Just for us to be clear on this powerful and profoundly Christian point, I want to look a little deeper at Jesus’ words here...

1. My Commands

When Jesus talks about ‘my’ commands, he is essentially speaking of two. When *summing up* the Old Testament Law of Moses (quite an accomplishment, I have to say!), Jesus said **‘Love God’** and **‘Love your neighbour as yourself’**. Those are both shortened versions. [‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your strength...’]

‘Love God’ sums up the first four commandments and ‘love your neighbour as yourself’ sums up the other six commandments. Today these two **Jesus commandments** form the sum-total our social and religious structure; it has become the basis of our way of life. *By comparison*, the Jewish emphasis, traditionally, is their Mitzvah, and their 613 commandments divided into 365 negative commandments and 248 positive commandments. We believe with Paul that by the Law no one can be justified. The other interesting link to the **Ten Commandments** in the OT are the

Ten Plagues in Egypt. I discovered that each plague was a challenge to specific **‘gods of Egypt’**. For example, the Egyptians had a god for irrigation called Hapi, so when the first plague *turned the water of the Nile into blood*, it challenged one of their gods. They also had a goddess depicted as a frog and so the second plague of ‘frogs’ challenged that figment of their imagination. And so it continued through all ten plagues. The final plague was the death of the firstborn. Moses said that unless a lamb’s blood was daubed on each doorpost the firstborn therein would perish. The angel of death would **‘Passover’** their home. It challenged Pharaoh’s power to keep his people safe (because he too was looked upon as a god).

God said of that Passover evening, ‘... I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord.’ (Exodus 12:12) The chronology is striking! Immediately after the LORD brought Israel ‘out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery’, the first Ten Words directed to them from Mount Sinai **are rooted in the gracious act of God’s liberation from slavery!**

2. My Father

Jesus’ primary focus was upon the relationship of two – **The Father and the Son**. Before Jesus talked to people, he talked to his father in prayer. This relationship is the heart of Christ’s faith. He has so much to say about ‘My Father!’ He said, ‘He who has seen me has seen The Father’. ‘No one can come to the Father, *except* through Me’.

“Before long, the world will not see me any more [*referring to His Death*], but you will see me [*referring to His Resurrection*]. Because I live, you also will live [*referring to the Promise of Salvation*]. On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.” (John 14:19–20) It’s just **mind-blowing stuff!** “Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and **we will come to him and make our home with him**.” (John 14:23)

3. Myself

Verse 21: “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. *He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him*.” (John 14:21) As Jesus Obeyed his Father, he gave Himself *completely* to the task before him; and what a task it was... summed up in those words in the Garden of Gethsemane – ‘not my will, but yours be done.’ He gives ‘Himself’.

I want to tell you this morning that **God’s Son and Heir, the Commander of Heaven and Maker of all creation in its glorious splendour ‘obeyed’ the ‘Father’ and came amongst us** into our sphere of existence, **with all its bugs, germs and viruses** of body, soul, mind and spirit. And it was here that He kept every good and holy Law perfectly. *The Commander became the Obedient Servant in love.* **Grace and Peace!**