



Prayers & Readings for this week

- ▶ Pray that our Brooklands church, despite no face-to-face fellowship for months, will enjoy a unity and oneness undergirded by faith in the Lord.
- ▶ In our private prayers we continue to uphold John & Ann B, Jon F and others with serious medical issues; those recently bereaved; those who are unemployed and/or seeking employment.
- ▶ We also pray for Lucy F in her role as chaplain at Handsworth Care Home, for those under her care, and for safety at work
- ▶ We pray for nations in the world where COVID-19 threatens the lives of so many thousands of people

Monday Reading Acts 4:23–5:11
Pray for Kingdom, Debi, David, Sarah & Faith
Matsetlo

Tuesday Reading Acts 5:12–42
Pray for Dr. Herbert McGonigle & family

Wednesday Reading Acts 6
Pray for Sigrid Nwator & family

Thursday Reading Acts 7:1–22
Pray for Myra O'Hara and family

Friday Reading Acts 7:23–53
Pray for Michael Okechukwa & family

Saturday Reading: Catch up
Pray for John & Vera Packard

Sunday Reading Acts 7:54–8:8
Pray for Sandra & Mike Pitt & Family

This week sees an important 'First' for us at Brooklands. For nearly four months, each week since Sunday 8th March, we've had no face-to-face church services, nor any collective times of prayer physically together. But, since recent easing of Government 'lockdown' regulations, some church members have asked if they could gather for personal, silent, individual prayer and reflection in our church sanctuary for a short period each week. Their intention is to individually 'pray for others, for situations, and for the seemingly impossible'. **Consequently, beginning on Wednesday 1st July, between 10.30-11.30am we will begin, and then continue such weekly meetings on Wednesdays until further notice.** Current Government COVID-19 regulations do not permit led collective group prayer meetings, with persons praying audibly, or using music or singing. But our proposed novel silent prayer arrangements (together with face coverings) can be welcomed because they will allow some of us to pray in the church premises as long as those taking part practise the normal Christian duty of care for one another - by doing all that can be done to reduce the chances of infecting others with the dangerous corona virus. Accordingly, on arrival, **booked in attenders** must use the main door, and sanitise their hands, before finding a designated 'socially distanced' sanitized chair to sit on in the sanctuary. At the end of their prayer, persons must exit the sanctuary via the fire door. (Please note, toilets, other areas of the building, and food and drinks will not be available.)

You may remember how the Revd Michael Kane in one of our recent virtual Sunday morning services, reminded us that the disciples, prior to the Day of Pentecost, were themselves also on a kind of *lockdown*. And while they were focused on prayer for ten allotted days during *their* lockdown, the Holy Spirit 'Broke In' so that they could 'Break Out'! In one sense, we hope that we can see the resumption of our time of prayer at our church like this. **While the age we are now living in, two thousand years later, is vastly different, the Spirit of God is the same Spirit, and the Lord of the harvest is the same Lord, and God has not changed from those ancient days. If you need something to drive you to your knees in prayer, let it be this!** We pray for the people we love, the people in need, our church and community; we pray for a way forward, ***the Lord's way*** in our strange days. **We pray to be light and salt in our world**, for the healing of the nations and a return of our country to faith, right living and a humble walk with God. **Lord, once again, 'teach us to pray'.**



Grace and peace to ALL!

Message: Where our Allegiance Lies **Readings:** Psalm 46; Phil 2: 1-11

This passage has fascinated me from my early days as a Christian. When I say 'fascinated', I mean it has always spoken powerfully, and continues to do so because I am still taking in all that it infers. This passage was written by the Apostle Paul; verses 5-11 specifically have been referred to by different scholars as 'Poetry', a 'Christ-Hymn', and as a 'Creedal statement'. It may be that this passage was not original to Paul; he may have used this 'poem' because of its beauty and depth of meaning. It is a hymn in that we use it to adore the Lord while still trying to plumb its profound depths. These opening verses fall into two sections: verses 1-4 and verses 5-11. The first four verses are really about our 'unity in Christ'. First of all you have...

1. Oneness

The main idea in verse one is that all believers are 'in Christ' and therefore one... "being in full accord and of one mind." (Philippians 2:1-2) *In an ideal world*, there would be this blissful unity and oneness evident to all. When the focus is upon Christ, there is an amazing oneness. However, when the focus is upon 'us', we become aware of the differences and what often follows are the difficulties. An example of this is the recent headlines of '*black lives matter*'; it is good to be reminded that there is, *after all*, only one humanity(!) – so let me just say for the record - '*black lives do matter*'. Friends, I do believe that the Gospel of Christ can make the crucial difference to how we see each other. This is played out in the verses which follow.

The next two verses clearly indicate how '*selfish ambition*;' and '*only our own personal interest*' can be real obstacles to any unity. Of course, Paul is speaking about more than mere 'unity'. Many gangs and groups of thieves think the same and agree with each other on many things, but Paul has something deeper in mind than criminal unity.

It is in the storyline where we find oneness – it is *the story of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*! There are many things we agree on, but the most powerful uniting power is the Gospel – **the gospel leaves no one out and is for ALL humanity** – '*red and yellow, black and white, all are precious in His sight*'. Some old Sunday School songs are profoundly true.

2. Emptiness

When Jesus, the Son of God, came amongst us 2020 years ago, he did not exploit the fact of his origin! 'Instead', we read, 'he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant [the word has the meaning of 'slave' – an evocative meaning today!].

He did not stop there either; for we are told that through his 'humility' he further 'became obedient to death' (a new and strange master for God's only begotten Son!)

And to this master, Jesus gave way so that he may do the impossible for others under slavery to sin and death - and rise again for all who have died believing! For this to become a reality by faith, he 'emptied himself'. It means '*become less than*' you really are. This should stop us in our tracks; **it appears almost incredible** – that God would do *that*. Why would He do such a thing? How can the Eternal One die anyway? My way of understanding this is the most extreme way to understand 'emptiness'.

Have you ever felt 'emptiness'? You have poured out so much that there is absolutely nothing left except what you are. In God's case, that is love. The New Testament declares this one irreducible minimum about God and his character – '**God is Love**!' (This is John's great revelation of God **in three words**). All despots and dictators who lived like gods and even believed they were gods – significantly were void of 'love'! But - **on the Cross of Christ**, we find a new and purer definition of what it means to be Divine. Jesus did not cease to be God on the cross; indeed, because He WAS God in human form, *he did something that only God could do!* Charles Wesley put it so concisely in one of his hymns: *He left His Father's throne above - So free, so infinite His grace - Emptied Himself of all but love, And bled for Adam's helpless race: 'Tis mercy all, immense and free, For O my God, it found out me!*

Here is the '*God of self-giving love*'! This is what it meant for Jesus to be '**equal with God**'. Jesus is the 'self-giving love of God'! Whatever people say about 'God' – from using His Name in vain to denying He exists – the New Testament declaration is this: He is The Loving, Giving, Dying and Rising-again God! Finally...

3. Fullness

Maybe I should say your 'Highness', but the idea here is the same. Jesus, God's Only Son, leaves eternal glory for temporal earth. The angels, the Devil and his demons all know of his origin and who he is. The latter think this is their big opportunity. They believe this is his 'Achilles heel', his vulnerability! They *tempt* him in the desert; they *manipulate* the religious leaders to set traps for him.

Jesus is betrayed and arrested, the crowd call for death - his death. He says not a word in his defence. He has been *rejected*! The demons *rejoice*, the angels are *mystified*. Jesus lies dead in the grave... Then it happens... just as Paul writes here in verse 9.

Pastor Karl Stanfield

0161 998 9863

07515 104216

Drawing people closer to God:
Loving, Growing, Serving



Sunday 28 June 2020

Pandemic-times Update

Brooklands Nazarene Church

*“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name... , that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:9–11). Pure and spotless integrity lies with only one solitary Person in human history, **our Saviour**, Jesus Christ. ‘All (others) have sinned and fallen short’ - Gandhi, Churchill and even Mother Teresa!*

I wanted to tell you this morning that it is **your right** to have this abundant and victorious life right now and throughout all eternity. And it is **His right** to have your allegiance - freely given. **Will you** swear allegiance to the Lord of Lords today! Grace & Peace!