



Readings for this week:

Monday	Reading 2 Cor. 12–13 Pray for John Torkington & family
Tuesday	Reading Gal. 1 Pray for Julie & Hayley
Wednesday	Reading Gal. 2 Pray for Jean & Dave Walker & family
Thursday	Reading Gal. 3 Pray for Carol Wray and family
Friday	Reading Gal. 4:1–20 Pray for Norma Whyte & family
Saturday	Reading: Catch up Pray for Michael, Debbie & Mikey Kane
Sunday	Reading Gal. 4:21–5:15 Pray for Efrain, Nertilla & Samuel

Prayer requests:

- Please pray for Sigrid's daughter Miriam, who is both ill and presently unemployed
- Pray for NTC college students starting this week (David R, Katie C, and Huw J)
- Pray for Huw as the College plans a placement with us
- We pray that the Lord will use our Brooklands' Harvest offering this year to bless the homeless by supporting work of the charity, Barnabus Manchester
- Pray for Jon F and John B as they continue their cancer treatments
- Please pray for the Rev Michael Kane and his family, not least as he prepares to preach in our streamed service next Sunday
- Pray for our team of technicians as they oversee live streaming of parts of our virtual morning services from our Brooklands church sanctuary from today.
- We continue our prayers for Nat & Chris H

This Sunday, some of our service comes to you live from our Brooklands church sanctuary. As this is our first live streamed service, we are hoping not to not have any hiccups or technical problems. Although most of what you will see and hear will be live, some items will have been pre-recorded. Pray that all goes well!

We are in discussions with NTC on plans for Huw Jones to have a College Placement with us. Since the pandemic causes unusual circumstances for a placement, we will be working to overcome any obstacles, while keeping to government & safeguarding regulations. Huw is very excited about his placement in what he regards as his church in Manchester. Please pray for Huw, his placement, and his studies.

In case you missed the *Update* last week, with news of our church Harvest this year, we are planning to assist **Barnabus Manchester** in a very pragmatic way. This Christian charity, in operation since 1991, has tried to meet the needs of homeless people, providing food and clothing, along with links to social services, and other facilities, at their *Beacon Drop-In Centre*, in Bloom Street. All monies raised towards our special offering (*marked with 'Harvest'*) over the next couple of weeks will be forwarded to this lovely Christian Charity. Thank you in advance for your gifts.

In a part of today's service, our District Superintendent, Rev Carl McCann, will endorse the church board's recommendation that our church should call Rev Michael Kane as our next Pastor. To happen, this would require a two-thirds majority vote in next month's postal ballot. We are looking forward to Michael preaching next Sunday! If anyone else would want to become a church member (and so able to have a voice in this important church decision) please let Karl know this week. Many thanks.

It was back in February, just before lockdown, that we mentioned our 'new year' in terms of '2020 vision'. One could be justified in thinking that many things look so unclear right now - politically, socially, and ecclesiastically too. Samuel's message last Sunday was a timely reminder to me that the church of Christ has always had difficult challenges to break through. So many of the great 'saints' of old came through victoriously, even though confronted with seemingly



unassailable obstacles, just as our Saviour and Pioneer, Jesus, did too. It is true – ‘We can do all things through Christ, who gives us the strength’. (Phil 4: 13)

This week, we need to look out for the good things - while **becoming good news, hope and promise** for all around us. Blessings to all... **Grace & Peace!**

Message: ‘Favoured’ **Readings:** Gen 37: 1-8; 2 Cor. 9: 6-10

Have you felt the **favour of the Lord** in your lives? I hope so; I certainly have. **Favour** is the ‘Steadfast love’ you find in the Old Testament, and the ‘Goodwill’ of God for mankind in the New Testament letters of Paul. The Apostle uses his famous phrase, ‘In Christ’. **It is ‘in Christ’ that we find God’s favour.**

If you have been to Spain you will have heard the phrase, ‘Por Favor’. It literally means, “by (your) favour”. It’s a colloquial way to say ‘please’. People often reply with ‘gracias’ (‘thank you’), or indeed ‘muchas gracias’. And it is all true, of course, because we do feel favoured by people’s kindnesses. Tell me, **are you feeling favoured by God’s kindness today** – his favour and grace?

Often favour and grace are used interchangeably, although some see a slight distinction. I want to understand them as basically the same for this message. These very commonly used ways of expressing thanks, also contain a very special and beautiful godly attitude with which the Lord approaches us daily.

Firstly, I want to highlight this in the Story of Joseph. He was after all A...

1. Favourite

The story of Joseph, as a ‘**favoured one**’ among his brothers is one of the most powerful images in the Old Testament. We make a mistake if we think the story of the ‘coat of many colours’, given to Joseph by his father, was Jacob ignoring his other sons.

Indeed, when we know the *whole* story, we find the real purpose, and see the bigger picture revealed - **but not until many years later**. God often works this way – so we must trust Him with such things in our lives too. It is not until Joseph reveals who he is to his brothers at the end of Genesis, that we find this hidden gem.

Joseph, second only to Pharaoh in all of Egypt, reveals himself to his brothers with these words,

“And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.” (Genesis 45:5).

My mother had a saying for this kind of thing, ‘If only I knew then what I know now...’. God had the long view in mind; the reason for Joseph appearing to be the favourite wasn’t known fully until many years later.

When Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, he also revealed something of the greatness of God... It was the salvation of many. As you know, Jacob was renamed Israel. Today many people understand Israel as God’s favoured people. Please do not make the same mistake about Israel that was made with Israel’s son, Joseph. There is always a greater purpose behind God’s favourites! And it is *not* the exclusion of others; it is rather **the inclusion of the forgotten ones**. For Paul, it was **that the world might know**. This missionary, called to go to the Gentiles, put it like this, “To them, God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory.**” (Colossians 1:27) Like Joseph, we may be God’s favourites, but there is a *greater* purpose – **others!** Secondly, in another story, we see how God made Nehemiah...

2. Favourable

Don’t you just love the story of Nehemiah! We find the crux of his dilemma encapsulated in verse 11. As we break into part of his prayer, we read, ‘O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. **Give your servant success today by granting him favour in the presence of this man. I was cupbearer to the king.**’ (Neh. 1: 11)

Nehemiah was in a good job. His boss was **King Artaxerxes**, the Ruler of the Persian Kingdom for forty years! He was well paid, well looked after and, I have to say, favoured by the king to be in such a position. One of his responsibilities was that he had to smile and look happy in his job. In fact, if he looked sad in the king’s presence, he could lose his life. However, this king was referred to by Plutarch (the renowned first-century Greek philosopher and biographer) as the ‘most remarkable’ of all the kings of Persia for a ‘**gentle and noble spirit**’. Josephus (the first-century Romano-Jewish historian) describes another Persian king (called Cyrus) as having a demeanour which was ‘favourable’ to Ezra and the



Jews! Indeed, **King Cyrus** famously benefitted the Jews, permitting them to return to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon and rebuild their temple. Ezra writes that, **'The Lord moved the heart of Cyrus King of Persia...'**

I guess that what I am saying is that, the Lord looks after his servants - even in the highest echelons of political power, to make favourable conditions possible for them to serve his people.

And, for any who may doubt this could have happened, there is the discovery by archaeologists of the famous 6th-century B.C. 'Cyrus Cylinder' (now in the British Museum), which gives a record of the King's achievements, recounting how he allowed the Jews under Ezra to return to their homeland to rebuild the Temple. Often when these things happen in life, it is an indirect goodness from the Lord to people like you and me! We perhaps need to pause for a moment and reflect; please try and recall **how often God has helped to make circumstances favourable for you**. One final perspective - quite simply, **In Jesus we find...**

3. Favour

This is no less than God's love for us in Christ and therefore God's Grace and Favour to you. If we ask: **What is the greater meaning of the story of Joseph for us today is?** Or if we ask: **What does the story of Nehemiah's good fortune look like today?** We find the answer in our faith in Jesus Christ. Paul writes in this powerful verse summarizing it like this, **"And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work"** (2 Corinthians 9:8). It is just 'all' there! **'All things'; 'All times'; 'All that you need!'** It is literally, **'All Grace...'**! Paul was adamant about the source of the greatest favour in the world - it is 'In Christ'. It is found when people come to faith in Jesus. It does not matter what religion you have, what race you are, what colour you have, what language you speak, or accent you have... **all of God's favour to you is found in Jesus**.

John established this from the beginning of his gospel, **"From the fulness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another**. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (John 1:16-17) And Paul put it plainly... **"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"** (Romans 8:32). John Wesley, in a sermon at Bristol in 1739, declared: **'The grace or love of God, whence cometh our salvation, is free in all, and free for all'**. I

wanted to tell you this morning that it does not depend upon what good you do, or how good you are. All those 'good' things were *His* before they were *yours*. Just as in Genesis 1:31, where 'God saw that the work of his hands was Good', you will find some good in everyone but *they are not the fountain of it* - **Christ is the fountain of all Grace!**

To put it another way, however great your shame, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is greater still! **Feel this Amazing Grace and be blessed!** Amen.

News received immediately Prior to printing:

- The Funeral of *Eric Best* will be held on Monday 5th October at Altrincham Crematorium at 3.15pm
- Sadly, we were informed that Mrs. Jeannie Jackson passed away yesterday (Saturday 25th September). Jeannie, and her late husband George, attended midweek activities in our church for the best part of twenty years. Jeannie was a dear friend to many local people.