



Readings for this week:

Monday	Reading Col 1:24–2:23 Pray for Isobel Cave & family
Tuesday	Reading Col 3:1–4:1 Pray for Christine Clarke
Wednesday	Reading Col 4:2–18 Pray for Enid & James Collins & family
Thursday	Reading 1 Thess 1:1–2:16 Pray for Luis, Miriam & family
Friday	Reading 1 Thess 2:17–4:18 Pray for Heather Critchley
Saturday	Reading: Catch up Pray for Elouise Critchley
Sunday	Reading 1 Thess 5 Pray for Colin Dunbar & family

Prayer requests:

- ▶ Pray for brothers & sisters in Christ who want to remain strong in their faith and are missing fellowship in their churches
- ▶ We pray for the elderly in our congregation who struggling with the status quo
- ▶ We pray for upcoming elections in the USA and godly direction
- ▶ We pray for our governments and especially the many Christians MPs in the Westminster and their good influence upon proceedings
- ▶ We pray for Huw and his placement with us; pray for his input into our streaming services and studies at NTC
- ▶ We continue our prayers for Chris & Nat H, Jon F and John and Ann B, among others

Welcome to our morning service and we trust you are all well. We are still on this strange journey with the 'you know what'. I have mentioned it so much, and I feel many people are fed up reading about it, so I am trying not to mention it today.

On another note, you will remember that we decided to designate this year's **Harvest Collection** to Barnabus Manchester, a Christian charity based in Bloom Street in the city centre. Our grand total raised to date is £717.50. A huge thank you to all who have participated in this harvest goal. We will now be contacting them and passing on the funds.

Perhaps another reminder that if you would like to be on a rota to be invited to meet in our Sanctuary on Sundays for one of our *live-streamed Sunday services*, please do let us know by phone, text or email. Places are limited, adhering to government regulations. We are proceeding with this with just small numbers presently.

**The funeral of Jeannie Jackson** will be held at Altrincham Crematorium on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> at 11.30 am. Jeannie was a neighbour and regular attendee (with George) at our community events. Jeannie was 94 and was always so cheerful and so interested in other people. We thank the Lord for Jeannie and pray for her family and close friends.

Jon F appreciates all **your prayers** and is in between therapies just now. He has been very tired due to the treatment. Christine H is still in hospital and in some discomfort struggling to eat and drink. John B is doing well, all things considered, but gets tired easily. Your prayers for these good folk and others are appreciated.

**Huw Jones** has met with the pastor this week for placement duties including discussions, phone calls to members and a few garden visits. Huw will be involved in all the services and although obvious restrictions do hamper the placement, we are trying to work through this to meet the College Placement requirements. We will be getting to know more about Huw over the weeks and months that lie ahead.

Please don't forget that the **clocks go back** one hour this Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> October. Enjoy the extra hour in bed! We do encourage everyone to trust the Lord for all things. On a practical side, get as much exercise as you can (walks etc) which help lift our mood and enable us to enjoy God's beautiful creation around us. Blessings to one and all... **Grace & Peace!**



**Message:** *The Three Words.* **Readings:** *Psalm 139: 1-10; Jer 18: 1-6*

I have always found this chapter from Jeremiah about his visit to the Potter's house intriguing. **It reminds me** of the opening chapters of Genesis where God creates mankind out of the dust of the ground. At least that is the implication from Gen 3: 19, *'for dust you are, and to dust you will return.'*

It also reminds me of the interesting slant placed on this by the Apostle Paul in 2 Cor 4, where he writes, **"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."** (2 Cor 4:7)

And, of course, that is exactly what the Potter was making in his workplace. He was making earthenware jars – no doubt to sell to people for cooking and storing food etc. But Paul adds this interesting detail - we are *not just dust and clay* but moulded jars capable of storing treasure.

But before we get there, it is worth considering - *in what way are we like 'clay in the potter's hand'?* *In what way* is the outcome down to the skill of the 'potter' - and in what way is the clay flawed, which becomes 'marred in his hands'?

I have said it enough times when standing at the graveside officiating at a funeral service; **'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust'**. And when people take and sprinkle soil on top of the coffin in the ground, they are acknowledging this ultimate truth. Dust we are, and to dust, we will return.

But, of course, there is far more to this because we have the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And in the Gospel, we are informed that, because of our faith, 'We have this treasure in jars of clay'!

So then, for a few moments, I want to take you on a journey to find this treasure. I have recently been taken with **three words** from the Bible. One of the words is taken from Genesis chapter one, another taken from John chapter 3 - and the final one taken from Paul's letter. The first word is...

## 1. 'Good'

Everything used to be good. I did talk a little about this aspect of goodness recently. But here is the verse, **"God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day."** (Gen 1:31)

More specifically, everything God had made was 'very good'. This is an incredible statement, *it is phenomenal!* However good we are, not everything about us is

good. That is why we need a saviour. *'For all have sinned and fallen short...'* But here, in the work of His hands, 'all that He made was very good'.

In Genesis chapter 1, there is what is called ***The appreciation formula: 'And God saw that it was good'***. [This formula is repeated in vss. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, & 25.] The final declaration of this appreciation formula is different, in that it applies to *everything God had made*. It also has the idea of 'enthusiasm' as God considered his handiwork. So, it was not *merely* good, but ***'Very Good'***!

God's crowning work of creation was done on the sixth day when he made humankind and declared, 'It was very good'. If we read on to Genesis 2: 4, we find another key formula that is repeated throughout Genesis, 'This is the account of...' It is used *eleven* times in Genesis referring to key accounts.

Genesis, therefore, is a wonderful introduction to all scripture...

*While mankind shares the ability to reproduce, with plants and animals only humankind is made in the image of God!* This likeness was 'Very Good'. And today, when we find the 'very good' in mankind, we are finding *proof of God our Creator*.

So far, so good; let's move on to the second word that I was taken with – this key emphasis in ALL of the Bible.

## 2. 'Love'

I have to say, from a Wesleyan perspective, this is where our top dead centre lies. Rather than theologically explain this, allow me to explain it mechanically. After so many miles of driving, it is wise to have the timing belt in your engine changed. When a new belt is fixed, the mechanic must ensure that the number 1 cylinder-position of your engine is at its highest point (*which is called TDC*). When this is in the correct position, the belt will keep the other cylinders in perfect time.

If we were to ask what the *'Top Dead Centre'* of our Christian faith is – the Bible's answer would be – the Love of God for us. Or, to put it in terms of what I have said so far, 'The greatest *good* in the world today, which is pure, true and holy, is ***the love of God displayed in Jesus Christ.***'

You will recall from our reading how Jesus responded to his difficult question.

"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: ***'Love the Lord your God*** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 'This is the first and greatest commandment.' Friends, this is the greatest summary of the entire Bible; and to make it entirely comprehensive, Jesus adds these words... And the second



is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:36–40)

Everything of importance found in the Law of God, and everything crucial to the message of the Prophets are found here - in the word 'Love'. We live in a crazy mixed-up world – that is for sure. But when the Love of God for us in Christ' *is our Top Dead Centre*, there is a timing that comes perfectly into play.

It is the work and power of the Holy Spirit applying God's timing to everything that happens. This does not explain *the difficult 'why' questions of life*, but it does mean that our lives can be Christ-like. Bad things happened to Jesus too, but His Top Dead Centre summed up in John 3: 16 [*for God so loved the world...*] leaves us holding on to *the final* of the Three Words – which is...

### 3. 'Hope'

Everything can be good again! Not just 'good' in a bad world... Not just 'Love' where there still is evidence of evil and hurt everywhere... but *Hope* that 'Goodness' and 'Love' will one day be our mainstay and in a renewed world never to experience wickedness and sinfulness ever again! In that powerful chapter, Romans 8, Paul writes, "For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." (Romans 8:24–25) Friends, we are 'a waiting people'. We can say: *My life is in You, Lord, my strength is in You, Lord My hope is in You, Lord, in You, it is in You!*

I was helping Mark & Rebecca with some plumbing in what was to be their utility room. There were bits of pipes and tools all over the floor. Laney walks in and says to her mum, '*Grandad's made a mess!*' There are a lot of situations about which we can say, '*It looks such a mess!*' But hey, that utility room is looking pretty good just now.

I have to say - there is something Good about Love and Hope. God looks down upon his creation and sees what has happened to us, and the mess we have made of our world.

Friends, I wanted to tell you this morning that if you believe in Jesus, then you are in the hands of **the Potter**. Here is God's Word for you this day; 'Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand... says the Lord' (Jer: 18: 6)

The Three words from God, valuable, full of promise and true: **Good, Love & Hope!**