



Readings for this week:

Monday	Reading Matt 8 Pray for Jon Fisher & family
Tuesday	Reading Matt 9:1–26 Pray for Jamie, Maida, Jimson & Jewell Filoteo
Wednesday	Reading Matt 9:27–10:15 Pray for Sylvia Findlay & brother Ron
Thursday	Reading Matt 10:16–42 Pray for Karina, Edwin & Kiyarah
Friday	Reading Matt 11:1–19 Pray for Jean & David Hall
Saturday	Reading: Catch up Pray for Lucy Frost
Sunday 17 th January	Reading Matt 11:20–12:14 Pray for Suzanne Gallier

Other Prayers:

We pray for *our whole nation* in time of national lockdown again

We pray for *Wendy B* who is poorly and residing in Opal House

We remember for *Margaret G* who is home from hospital but in need of our prayers; we remember all those elderly in our congregation

We pray for *Isobel C* seeing a consultant about breast cancer. We pray also for *Claire S* in this regard too.

We pray again specifically for those on the *front line* in the NHS, many in our church circles are in that cohort. Keep them safe we pray. *Michael O*, who works on a Covid-ward at Wythenshawe hospital appreciates our prayers

We give you a warm welcome to our Sunday gathering. Since our last Update, we have moved again into *national lockdown*. I think it is encouraging to many that certain elderly people in our fellowship have received or are about to receive their initial Vaccine jab. We are sure that in the weeks that lie ahead it will give people a lot more confidence and peace of mind. We thank the Lord for small mercies every day.

Despite stricter measures, we are still able to gather a working team to create our digital services and broadcast them from our sanctuary at church. We deliberately keep our numbers to a minimum and take every precaution to keep all those present in as safe an environment as possible. We deem it important to continue our 'live' services broadcast weekly from our sanctuary. It is demanding for several people, yet they never tire of this commitment. We thank the Lord for all of them and all who have taken part.

Our next board meeting will be held on Friday 15th January and will be making final preparations for the pastoral transition. This has been planned for February as Rev Michael Kane takes over the reins of leadership with a supportive church board behind him. We give thanks to the Lord for his guidance and help in what can often be a long and drawn-out transition and especially with the context of the past ten months.

Huw Jones plans to return to NTC for the final two weeks of January for the Intensives as will Katie C and Vivienne B. Huw will continue his college under Mick's guidance from next month. Huw will also be the speaker on Sunday 31st January. The mid-point review with college placement manager and student went very well last week. Your continued prayer for Hew bearing fruit.

Our Wednesday morning prayer times on Zoom from 10.30am is up and running again. Please join us if you can, using the *usual Zoom link* found on Mark's weekly email which includes this Update. We are grateful for all who pray with us and for us privately at home or in other ways.

Karl is planning to conclude his pastoral ministry with a short four-week series entitled, *Four Reasons to be Thankful*. In the first, we are thinking about the concept and place of 'Transaction' inherent in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Blessings to all our readers. Grace and peace!



Message: The Transaction

Readings: OT: Psalm 130; NT: Eph 1: 1-10

It has been my habit each January to run a short New Year Series. So, throughout January and finishing on 7th February, I want to consider the *Four Reasons to be Thankful*. There are many, many reasons to be thankful but I have chosen these four because they are singularly significant on their own.

The first reason to be thankful to God is for something that theologians and hymn-writers have referred to as *the transaction*. Some 100 key passages refer to salvation in terms of 'transaction'. Here are a couple of examples. "*For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed... but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*" (1 Peter 1:18–19)

Such verses are loaded with concepts of **purchase, redemption, and ransom**. Then there is Romans 3: 23-24. "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*" (Romans 3:23–24) The Greek word **Lutron** which Paul uses here is also used in the Greek translation of the OT; it often designates **monetary compensation** given to the wronged party **in lieu of capital punishment** for the perpetrator.

It was a complete redemption that implied freedom from all kinds of slavery! Here is the example, and while it sounds harsh, the act of '*redemption*' really does save the day. It is the story of a man in his day who owned an ox. For us today, it might be a truck, or another large vehicle used for work. Imagine the costs and responsibilities drivers have today to ensure their safety and the safety of others... Now here is the story.

"But if the ox has a history of goring *someone* and the owner knew it and did nothing to guard against it, then if the ox kills a man or a woman, the ox is to be stoned and the owner given the death penalty. If a ransom is agreed upon instead of death, *he must pay it in full as a redemption for his life.*" (Exodus 21:29–30) These life and death situations were solved using the concept of '*redemption*'. Jesus seems to be evoking the prophecy of Isaiah 53 where *the Suffering Servant would bear people's iniquities* by becoming a Redeemer...

This is declared plainly in Mark's gospel... "*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*" (Mark 10:45)

The word '**redemption**' used here by Jesus is a term for the marketplace where people *pay a price to buy* something; the more valuable it is, the more you must pay for it. It is essentially an Old Testament term, but it is also taken up by New Testament writers and applied to something *immensely powerful that Jesus did*.

It is during a conversation Jesus had with a prominent religious leader of his day that we have this timeless and concise declaration of the Gospel by John – '**For God so loved the world, he Gave his only Son that whoever believes will not perish but have eternal life.**' This 'gift' was the payment for our 'Redemption' to set us free. These passages and countless others are saying one main thing!

1. The Price is paid!

Without being too flippant about it, here is another scenario. For several years, our family would go out on Christmas Eve for a coffee to Starbucks, especially when Mark & Simona joined the ranks – and before the grandkids came along. There were quite a few of us and the tradition was that the 'oldest' one *paid for the coffee and cakes*! I did not mind paying for these because it was the only time in the year that tradition demanded this! Everyone enjoyed the treat and only one person went 'ouch'! In no way am I trying to trivialize this; but in taking this legitimate OT concept into the 21st century, I am trying to say that **there was absolutely no reluctance in paying the bill**.

So, when Jesus '**paid the price**' for our salvation, He did not do it *grudgingly* in any shape or form. How can I simply, but truly give this '*transaction*' the magnanimity it deserves? When Jesus paid the '*Ransom*'; when he bore our '*Redemption*', it was so BIG and so DEMANDING that it was dealt with completely in **One Unspeakable Payment...** for the whole world.

Charles Wesley writes about this in his hymn; *O Happy Day... 'Tis done, the great transaction's done, I am my Lord's, and he is mine...*' In Stuart Townend's *Behold the Lamb*, he writes these lines, 'The wounds that heal, the death that brings us life, **Paid the price to make us one...**' When Frances Alexander wrote *There is a Green hill far away*, she included the lines, 'There was no other good enough **to pay the price of sin...**' And Philipp Bliss's *Man of Sorrows*, includes the line, 'When He comes, our Glorious King, **All the ransomed** home to bring!'



So then, if *the Price is Paid* by Christ, then know this...

2. The Gift is offered free!

The idea of **total liberty** has yet to be plumbed and understood properly. We still need reminding that it is ALL paid for. There is nothing we need to do to *earn* our liberty in Christ. Some of you know what it is like to pay your monthly mortgages. Sometimes a mortgage debt can last for 25 or 30 years. You may wish to renovate your kitchen or something else at home, and so you add it to the mortgage and pay it off that way. Every chancellor of the Exchequer knows that whatever is provided – it has got to be paid for!

The day eventually comes when you make your final mortgage instalment! Remember the hymn – ‘O Happy Day!’ It is all yours now but guess what – ***you are still paying for it.*** There are repairs, insurance, redecorating, endless little jobs and all the rest...

When we talk about **Redemption** and the **Ransom** in terms of our salvation, we need to understand that ***the payment was made in full.*** You never need to take out another loan. Never! The only debt you and I have as Christians is **the debt of love**. There is a saying which holds true and it is this – ‘**There is nothing free in life**’.

We need to grasp ***the freedom*** inherent in the Gospel. There are no catches. Jesus paid the price *in full* and *everything* is covered. There is nothing you need to do except *return His love*. As the Scriptures say, ‘**Freely you have received, freely give**’.

And here is the miraculous irony of it all summed up by the hymnwriter Frances Ridley Havergal. She puts this paradox perfectly in these words...

I love, I love my Master, I will not go out free,
For He is my Redeemer; He paid the price for me.
In verse 2 she adds...

He chose me for His service, and gave me power to choose
That blessed, perfect freedom, which I shall never lose.

We thank God that, ‘the great *Transaction*’s done’!

And to love Jesus our Redeemer *in return* – is perfect freedom!