



Readings for this week:

Monday	Reading Matt 24:1–28 Pray for Michael Okechukwa & family
Tuesday	Reading Matt 24:29–51 Pray for John & Vera Packard
Wednesday	Reading Matt 25:1–30 Pray for Sandra & Mike Pitt & family
Thursday	Reading Matt 25:31–46 Pray for Grant & Crys Pettitt
Friday	Reading Matt 26:1–25 Pray for Fay Powell
Saturday	Reading: Catch up Pray for Matthew, Charlotte, and Joshua Purves
Sunday	Reading Matt 26:26–56 Pray for Adriana, Philip, David, Joseph, Pete & Rebecca Richmond and grandma

Other Prayers:

- We pray for Kingdom & Debi and give thanks for the safe arrival of baby Malachi! Mum & baby are both doing well.
- Pray for the families of the more than 100,000 who have lost loved ones in the present Covid-19 Pandemic in the past year.
- We pray for our new pastor, Rev and Mrs Michael and Debbie Kane, not forgetting little Mikey as Mick takes up the leadership of our church; we pray also for the board as they assist him.
- We pray for Katie C as she attends her first Board of Ministry interviews over the next month. We pray for all twelve candidates.

Welcome to our special worship service on the Lord's Day! It has always been a privilege and delight for me to welcome people to our fellowship each Sunday morning, and today is no different. This weekend, however, sets an important bookmark in the history of our church at Brooklands. There are some members and friends who can look back over many years - and even decades, recalling the faithfulness of our Lord and God among us. But today I ask you to join me in looking forward to a New Day. As the Psalmist memorably put it, ***"This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."*** (Psalm 118:24)

And what a week it has been for some people; We think of Debbi & Kingdom Matsetlo and the safe arrival of ***baby Malachi*** on Monday 1st February, weighing 3.5kg (7lbs 7ozs). Mum and baby are both well and we offer them our hearty congratulations!

It has also been a week when the Archbishops of Canterbury and York have invited the nation *to pray at 6pm each evening* through February. Archbishops Welbury and Cottrell issued, *"a call to the nation to pause and reflect to remember the more than 100,000 people across the UK who have died after contracting Covid-19 and all those who know and love them... to support one another... and care with kindness"*. Perhaps we can join with so many others in offering such a daily prayer during this month.

This weekend we find ourselves as a church in a time of change. People say it takes a good six months for many people to adapt to retirement. From the church's perspective, some can fear and want to avoid 'change' of any kind. The resurrection of Christ brought radical change to everything, and while the disciples' response was to hide themselves away (as we often do in anxious moments), Jesus came to them with four words, ***'Peace be with you'***. Jesus said it twice!

I extend these words to all of you – *'Peace be with you'*; we have prayed and trusted in the Lord for His direction and now the day we asked God for has arrived and the next steps have His blessing. We have His peace.

Ingrid and I want to express our most sincere appreciation and thanks to all of you for the past thirty-one years of support and trust. It has been our privilege to serve in this pastoral capacity at Brooklands. Our hearts are full with these shared years of Christian love and ministry together. We give Him all the glory.

Blessings to you all! Grace and... 'peace'

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Message: Thanksgiving!

Readings: OT: Psalm 100; NT: Colossians 1: 3-14

The final part of this short New Year series is simply entitled **Thankfulness!**

Our reason to be 'Thankful' is simply that it is in the warp and weft of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ! It is like a fabric that is woven together with a good quality thread. On its own, it may not look very strong, but after a good weaver has applied his trade, the finished result is not only beautiful to behold, but has quality, strength, and great value!

My father worked as a weaver all his life (*mostly linen, because of the abundance of flax grown in the north of Ireland*), and my mother worked for a time in embroidery. They were humble trades which have long given way to other industries.

While the Apostle Paul was *a tentmaker by trade (to help support his ministry)*, there was another fabric for which he was thankful. **It was like the tunic** that the soldiers decided to cast lots for at the Cross because it was of a special design. John records it this way...

*"When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. **This garment was seamless**, woven in one piece from top to bottom. "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." (John 19:23)*

That seamless garment woven in one piece is like the fabric of faith, and it is of great worth. And the fabric is the meshing of, **'your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love you have for all the saints'**.

Paul writes here in verse 3, *"We **always thank God**, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ when we pray for you because we have heard of **your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints...**" (Colossians 1:3-4)*

God is The Master Weaver, and though we do not always see it plainly, **'All things work together for the good of those who love Him...'** When you look at a fabric you can't see it, but on closer inspection, it is in fact, *a multitude of crosses*.

Someone wrote this lovely poem...

*Tis He who fills the shuttle, and He knows what is best;
So I shall weave in earnest, and leave to Him the rest.
Not 'til the loom is silent, And the shuttles cease to fly
Shall God unroll the canvas, And explain the reason why.
The dark threads are as needed in the Weaver's skilful hand
As the threads of gold and silver in the pattern, He has planned.*

(Benjamin Malachi Franklin 1882-1965)

When **Corrie Ten Boom** spoke to audiences about her experiences of cruelty at the hands of the Nazis, she would often look down while she talked. That was because, while she spoke, she was also occupied with a piece of needlework. After telling her story of the cruelty in the German concentration camps and the death of her father and sister Betsie, **Corrie would hold up the embroidery for everyone to see.**

The reverse side of the fabric was a jumble of colours and threads with no discernible pattern. She would say, **'this is how many see their lives.'** Then she would turn it over to show the intended pattern so obvious on the front. Then she would say, **"This is how God views your life and someday we will have the privilege of seeing it from His point of view."**

Turning to a 21st-century analogy; if you use Google Photos on your mobile phone, you will know that just about every week they send you selected photographs with the words, 'Look back at...'

The Google app then takes you back to a date one year ago; then two years ago, then three... then five; then 12, 13, 14, even 15 years ago! Occasionally, they are photographs I have forgotten about. They remind me about good places, and people, and things I haven't given thought to for a long time – *as if forgotten about entirely*.

And I must say, I am never disappointed by these **pictures of special moments in time**; for that is what they are! I usually spend time looking at them and being incredibly grateful for the occasions captured, as if *a reminder from God* about past blessings. Some are family and some church family. And sometimes I will send a copy of a great photo to our family Whatsapp group.

And *it is a little like that for me today*. And it was a little like that for Paul when he wrote these words. **'We always thank God the Father...'** You see...



1. It was Personal

It was back on Sunday the twenty-second of November last year when I referred to the same phrase in Eph 1: 15, ***'your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and your love for all the saints...'*** It was also the passage I first preached from at Brooklands 31 years ago.

Both references in Eph. Ch.1 and Col. Ch. 1 essentially say the same thing. Paul is expressing ***his thankfulness*** to God for these two churches. My first pastorate was in Croydon [*and I remember a relative of our District Superintendent, with us today, who spoke so highly of Carl, then 12 years old - who came top at the District Bible Quizzes back in the day!!*], and my second here, and I thank God for the good people I have known in both.

This thankfulness is specifically for the **faith** and **love** that was in action in the churches; the same faith and love that ***'springs from the Hope that is stored up for you in heaven... and that you already heard about in the gospel'***.

His faith & love are woven together with theirs and this was as personal as it gets. In the Evangelical and Wesleyan traditions, we speak of our faith in ***'personal'*** terms. The theme begun in the first two verses ***is fully laden*** with Holiness and Faithfulness, Gracefulness and Peacefulness! *"To the holy and faithful **brothers in Christ** (saints) at Colosse: Grace and peace to you from God our Father."* (Colossians 1:2)

Notice the ***'brothers in Christ'*** (generic); it means ***'fellow believers'***, for that is what we are. And as believers together we are ***'fruit-bearing'*** (Vs. 10), and there you have the ***'working together for the good of those who love Him'***. These were not objectively written insights, ***but personal tributes!***

Not only was this personal, but...

2. It was Powerful

Perhaps I should say, it was God showing ***His*** Power. Paul is thankful for this **Power** and this ***'glorious might'*** because – while there was a day when Paul hated the church, ***he now loved them as if they were his very bloodline!*** And that change of mind was down to the sheer power of God.

Although Saul had *persecuted* innocent people, imprisoned them, and gone over-the-top in doing his level best to fight against the Jesus they followed, he

now became the foremost follower & promoter of Jesus the Messiah – what a Transformation!

Saul went from being an ardent activist against everything Jesus stood for, to having ***'faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and... love for all the saints...'*** Talk about ***eating your own words!***

Have you ever had to ***'eat your own words'***? How did it taste? I was thinking about how that might translate into other languages. I was wondering if anyone might be listening to this and English is not their first language, and how that might translate. Then I thought of that other colloquialism – ***'eating humble pie'*** – then I thought – that is probably even more confusing!

I only know of one medium that says it all. It is ***The Lord's Table***.

When we accept the invitation to gather around this Table, we must do so with both, *a repentive humility and thanksgiving!*

And when we come here to receive the bread and cup, ***it is Personal!*** How can anyone do this without being touched? And I also want to say – ***It is Powerful!*** If there is any place, and I quote Paul, where we are ***'strengthened with all power according to his glorious might', it is surely at this Table of love and thanksgiving.***

And, as you well know, the word ***'Eucharist'***, which is a synonym for this Table, simply means ***'I Give Thanks'***. And it is preeminently done in *the breaking* of bread and *the drinking* of the cup, as we remember Christ's *death on the cross* for us.

May He continue to weave this pattern of the cross - ***Faith in the Lord, and Love for all the saints*** - in all our lives.

So, it is fitting then, I think, that we take our place to share in this final and greatest illustration of ***'Thanksgiving'***, receiving God's grace through the bread and wine and at the Table of God's Son.

*Give thanks with a grateful heart,
Give thanks to the Holy One,
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son!*
(Song was written by Henry Smith 1978)