

# Yateley Baptist Church, Sunday 10 May 2020

## Opening Prayer

### Hymn: Praise! 579

Your hand, O God, has guided  
your flock, from age to age;  
your faithfulness is written  
on history's every page.

They knew your perfect goodness,  
whose deeds we now record;  
and both to this bear witness:  
one church, one faith, one Lord.

2 Your heralds brought the gospel  
to greatest as to least;  
they summoned us to hasten  
and share the great King's feast.  
And this was all their teaching  
in every deed and word;  
to all alike proclaiming:  
one church, one faith, one Lord.

3 Through many days of darkness,  
through many scenes of strife,  
the faithful few fought bravely  
to guard the nation's life.  
Their gospel of redemption –  
sin pardoned, man restored –  
was all in this enfolded:  
one church, one faith, one Lord.

4 And we, shall we be faithless?  
Shall hearts fail, hands hang down?  
Shall we evade the conflict  
and throw away the crown?  
Not so! in God's deep counsels  
some better thing is stored;  
we will maintain, unflinching,  
one church, one faith, one Lord.

5 Your mercy will not fail us  
nor leave your work undone;  
with your right hand to help us,  
the victory shall be won.  
And then by earth and heaven  
your name shall be adored;  
and this shall be their anthem:  
one church, one faith, one Lord.

*Edward H Plumptre (1821-1891)*

## **Reading: Philippians 1:27-2:4, ESV**

<sup>27</sup> Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, <sup>28</sup> and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. <sup>29</sup> For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, <sup>30</sup> engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

**2** So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, <sup>2</sup> complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

## **Hymn: Praise! 570**

Glorious things of you are spoken,  
Zion, city of our God!  
He whose word cannot be broken  
formed you for his own abode:  
on the Rock of ages founded,  
what can shake your sure repose?  
With salvation's walls surrounded  
you may smile at all your foes.

**2** See, the streams of living waters,  
springing from eternal love,  
well supply your sons and daughters  
and all fear of want remove:  
who can faint while such a river  
ever flows their thirst to assuage?  
Grace, which like the Lord the giver  
never fails from age to age.

**3** Round each habitation hovering  
see the cloud and fire appear  
for a glory and a covering,  
showing that the Lord is near:  
thus they march, the pillar leading,  
light by night and shade by day;  
daily on the manna feeding  
which he gives them as they pray.

**4** Saviour, since of Zion's city  
I through grace a member am,  
let the world deride or pity,  
I will glory in your name:  
fading are the world's best pleasures,  
all its boasted pomp and show;  
solid joys and lasting treasures  
none but Zion's children know.

*John Newton (1725-1807)*

## Prayer

### Hymn: Praise! 577

The Church's one foundation  
is Jesus Christ her Lord;  
she is his new creation  
by water and the word:  
from heaven he came and sought her  
to be his holy bride;  
with his own blood he bought her  
and for her life he died.

2 Elect from every nation  
yet one through all the earth;  
her charter of salvation –  
one Lord, one faith, one birth:  
one holy name she blesses,  
and shares one holy food;  
as to one hope she presses  
with every grace endued.

3 We see her long divided  
by heresy and sect;  
yet she by God is guided –  
one people, one elect:  
her vigil she is keeping,  
her cry goes up, 'How long?'  
and soon the night of weeping  
shall be the dawn of song.

4 In toil and tribulation  
and tumult of her war,  
she waits the consummation  
of peace for evermore:  
till with the vision glorious  
her longing eyes are blessed;  
at last the church victorious  
shall be the church at rest!

5 Yet she on earth has union  
with those whose rest is won,  
and shares in sweet communion  
with God the Three-in-One,  
whose love has made them holy!  
Lord, grant to us your grace  
with them, the meek and lowly,  
in heaven to see your face.

*Samuel J Stone (1839-1900)*

## **Sermon: Philippians 2:1-4 – Living Worthily as Part of a Church**

***“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy...” (v1)***

We all enjoy a little bit of “schadenfreude”- “pleasure derived by someone from another person's misfortune.”

However when the church is at the centre of a scandal it is far from enjoyable or funny, especially when arguments arise from something as daft as a church lunch, where one of the elders had been served a smaller piece of ham than a small child sat next to him.

Kent Hughes also reported a story of a Welsh church: “Yesterday, the two opposition groups sent ministers to the pulpit. Both spoke simultaneously, each trying to shout above the other. Both called for hymns, and the congregation sang two – each side trying to drown out the other. The groups began shouting at each other. Bibles were raised in anger. The Sunday morning service turned into bedlam. Through it all, the two preachers continued to outshout each other with their sermons. Eventually a deacon called a policeman. Two came in and began shouting for the congregation to be quiet. They advised the forty people in the church to return home. The rivals filed out, still arguing. Last night one of the group called a ‘let’s-be-friends’ meeting. It broke up in argument.”

God’s people can act in such foolish ways.

They also illustrate a truth that often goes unacknowledged – that many of the greatest threats to churches don’t come from outside, but from within. Karl Barth said, “There are no letters in the New Testament apart from the problems of the church.”

For the Philippians, pressures outside the church were immense, but if the Philippians were to live lives worthy of their heavenly citizenship, they needed to be on their guard to make sure that they weren’t undone by pressures and problems from within the church.

“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel” (1:27); “complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind” (2:2).

They need to stand firmly united for the gospel and humbly united so that they could endure the suffering they were facing outside the church and heal divisions within.

***“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy...”***

## **1. If this is true... (1)**

Four certainties Paul reminds us of:

- a) "So if there is any encouragement in Christ". Paul want us to reflect on our initial experience of salvation - Christ called and we answered, in faith, by the prompting of the Holy Spirit.
- b) "[if] any comfort from love". "The experience of love in the community gives comfort, especially in times of suffering. While the accent is on the love of believers for one another, Paul reminds his readers that Christ is the source of this love." We are loved unconditionally by our Saviour, forgiven, guaranteed heaven, given the Holy Spirit to dwell in us (Ephesians 1:13-14). We should show it to others: "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers" (1 John 3:16).
- c) "any participation in the Spirit" - seen in 1:5 - their "partnership in the gospel" and the way they supported Paul financially (4:15-18). The partnership that believers have is a common sharing of the Spirit. Disunity would affect the ministry of Paul and the spread of the gospel. We all serve God by his Spirit (3:3) and we are called to stand firm in the one Spirit (1:27).
- d) "any affection and sympathy". "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy" (Matthew 5:7). If we have received mercy from God, then that should overflow from us to others.

Paul now wants them to look forward - to maintain unity and mutual care in the church.

What Paul said to the Philippians is vital for Christians in every age – if we are to live lives that are worthy of Christ, we too must be united.

## **2. ... be united ... (2)**

Paul says, "complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind."

Verse 27, he declared: "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel."

Peter O'Brian says in his commentary, "The call, here in 2:2 to be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind is a plea that the Philippians be gospel orientated as they relate to and care for one another.

"Being of the same mind" = think, feel, be minded, have the attitude of mind, take a view, think, set the mind on, and be concerned."

His call is to work towards a common goal, which is ultimately following the supreme example of Christ. Only when we set our minds on one thing – the gospel – will we be united around one common subject.

It means agreeing categorically that Jesus Christ is Lord and being prepared – corporately – to submit to his Lordship in our individual lives and in our life as the church.

Paul was able to rest his joy in Christ and the gospel and he assured them that his joy would be “complete” if they lived out their unity in the gospel.

He knew that to be gospel oriented was to be others oriented.

### **3. ... by cultivating these attitudes (3-4)**

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves” (3).

Believers must stop setting their minds on their own ambitions and their own glory.

Paul has already addressed selfish ambition in chapter 1, when he spoke of those in the church who preached Christ for self-seeking purposes. Now Paul points to those who are dividing the church and admonishes them to purge themselves of this toxic attitude.

Selfish ambition ☐ vain conceit - vain glory – people who on the outside seem very pious, but lack inner spirituality

Paul goes on to commend the attitude which builds up unity: “but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”

In Greek Literature, excessive pride was condemned, leading to the downfall of those who possessed it, but humility implied lowliness, weakness, lack of freedom, and subjection and was therefore highly undesirable.

Paul desired humility above all. He points them to Jesus Christ, who “humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed upon him the name that is above every name.” v8-9

Jesus chose his destiny. He chose to make himself nothing; he chose to humble himself. In his humility, he expressed immense compassion for humanity by enduring suffering and death.

“In humility count others more significant than yourselves.” Instead of being self-absorbed, as the world is, our thoughts are to turn outside ourselves, to regard the value of others.

St Chrysostom wrote: “There is nothing so foreign to a Christian as arrogance.”

“I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:33-11:1).

Verse 4: “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

A healthy church that will survive the onslaught of a hostile and fracturing culture must be a place where each one looks not to their own interest, but to the interests of others.

“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ” (1:27)

The church is worthy of Christ when it has a unified focus on the gospel. This gospel unity will show itself in care for others – counting them more significant than we do ourselves and looking to their interests first.

The source of Paul’s call to lives worthy of the gospel through unity and oneness is Christ. All this is possible because as believers, we are “in Christ” and we know that there is no better place to be!

### **Hymn: Praise! 587**

Blessed be the tie that binds  
our hearts in Christian love;  
the fellowship of kindred minds  
foreshadows that above.

2 Before our Father’s throne  
we pour our fervent prayers;  
our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,  
our comforts and our cares.

3 We share our mutual woes,  
our mutual burdens bear;  
and often for each other flows  
the sympathizing tear.

4 When for a while we part,  
this thought will soothe our pain:  
in Christ we still are joined in heart  
and we shall meet again.

5 This glorious hope revives  
our courage on the way,  
while each in expectation lives  
and longs to see that day.

6 From sorrow, toil and pain  
and sin we shall be free,  
and perfect love and friendship reign  
through all eternity.

*John Fawcett (1740-1817)*

### **Closing Prayer**