

Yateley Baptist Church, Sunday 31 January 2021

Opening Prayer

Hymn: Praise! 100A

All people that on earth do dwell,
sing to the Lord with cheerful voice:
serve him with joy, his praises tell,
come now before him and rejoice!

2 Know that the Lord is God indeed,
he formed us all without our aid;
we are the flock he loves to feed,
the sheep who by his hand are made.

3 O enter then his gates with praise,
and in his courts his love proclaim;
give thanks and bless him all your days:
let every tongue confess his name.

4 The Lord our mighty God is good,
his mercy is for ever sure;
his truth at all times firmly stood,
and shall from age to age endure.

William Kethe (d. 1594)

Reading: Acts 21:17-40, ESV

When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly. ¹⁸ On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰ And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed. They are all zealous for the law, ²¹ and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs. ²² What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. ²³ Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; ²⁴ take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law. ²⁵ But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our judgement that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality." ²⁶ Then Paul took the men, and

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the next day he purified himself along with them and went into the temple, giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering presented for each one of them.

²⁷ When the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, ²⁸ crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." ²⁹ For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. ³⁰ Then all the city was stirred up, and the people ran together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut. ³¹ And as they were seeking to kill him, word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. ³² He at once took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. And when they saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. ³³ Then the tribune came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. He enquired who he was and what he had done. ³⁴ Some in the crowd were shouting one thing, some another. And as he could not learn the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. ³⁵ And when he came to the steps, he was actually carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd, ³⁶ for the mob of the people followed, crying out, "Away with him!"

³⁷ As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the tribune, "May I say something to you?" And he said, "Do you know Greek? ³⁸ Are you not the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?" ³⁹ Paul replied, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no obscure city. I beg you, permit me to speak to the people." ⁴⁰ And when he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the steps, motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great hush, he addressed them in the Hebrew language.

Hymn: Praise! 973

When this passing world is done,
when has sunk the radiant sun,
when I stand with Christ on high,
seeing all life's history,
then, Lord, shall I fully know,
not till then, how much I owe.

2 When I stand before the throne,
dressed in beauty not my own,
when your fulness, Lord, I see,
when my heart from sin is free,
then, Lord, shall I fully know,
not till then, how much I owe.

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3 When the praise of heaven I hear,
loud as thunders to the ear,
loud as many waters' noise,
sweet as harp's melodious voice,
then, Lord, shall I fully know,
not till then, how much I owe.

4 Chosen, not for good in me,
called by grace from wrath to flee,
hidden in the Saviour's side,
by the Spirit sanctified,
teach me, Lord, on earth to show
by my love how much I owe.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813-1843)

Prayer

Hymn

When I fear my faith will fail,
Christ will hold me fast;
when the tempter would prevail,
he will hold me fast.
I could never keep my hold
through life's fearful path;
for my love is often cold;
he must hold me fast.

*He will hold me fast,
he will hold me fast;
for my Saviour loves me so,
he will hold me fast.*

2 Those he saves are his delight,
Christ will hold me fast;
precious in his holy sight,
he will hold me fast.
He'll not let my soul be lost;
his promises shall last;
bought by him at such a cost,
he will hold me fast.

3 For my life he bled and died,
Christ will hold me fast;
justice has been satisfied;
he will hold me fast.
Raised with him to endless life,
he will hold me fast
till our faith is turned to sight,
when he comes at last!

Ada Habershon (1861-1918); adap. Matt Merker

Sermon: Acts 21:17-40 – True Love is Costly

And when he came to the steps, he was actually carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd, for the mob of the people followed, crying out, “Away with him” (35-36)

So the Lord was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. (Genesis 6:6, NLT)

1. Financially

“Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation” (24:17)

“There have been times when people have come to me as their pastor, and asked about ‘tithing,’ giving away a tenth of their annual income. They notice that in the Old Testament there are many clear commands that believers should give away 10 percent. But in the New Testament, specific, quantitative requirements for giving are less prominent. They often asked me, ‘You don’t think that now, in the New Testament, believers are absolutely required to give away ten percent, do you?’ I shake my head no, and they give a sigh of relief.

But then I quickly add, ‘I’ll tell you why you don’t see the tithing requirement laid out clearly in the New Testament. Think. Have we received more of God’s revelation, truth, and grace than the Old Testament believers, or less?’ Usually there is uncomfortable silence. ‘Are we more ‘debtors to grace’ than they were, or less? Did Jesus ‘tithes’ his life and blood to save us or did he give it all?’ Tithing is a minimum standard for Christian believers. We certainly wouldn’t want to be in a position of giving away less of our income than those who had so much less of an understanding of what God did to save them.” (Tim Keller)

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21)

2. Reputationally

“And when they heard it, they glorified God.”

And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, “You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed. They are all zealous for the law, and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs. What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come.”

“Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself along with them and went into the temple, giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering presented for each one of them” (26).

3. Physically

“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it”

Hymn: Praise 2! 7

In Christ alone my hope is found,
he is my light, my strength, my song;
this cornerstone, this solid ground,
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My comforter, my all-in-all,
here in the love of Christ I stand.

2 In Christ alone!—who took on flesh,
fulness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
scorned by the ones he came to save:
till on that cross as Jesus died,
the wrath of God was satisfied—
for every sin on him was laid;
here in the death of Christ I live.

3 There in the ground his body lay,
light of the world by darkness slain:
then bursting forth in glorious day
up from the grave he rose again!
And as he stands in victory
sin’s curse has lost its grip on me,
for I am his and he is mine—
bought with the precious blood of Christ.

4 No guilt in life, no fear in death,
this is the power of Christ in me;
from life’s first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
can ever pluck me from his hand;
till he returns or calls me home,
here in the power of Christ I’ll stand!

Stuart Townend & Keith Getty

Closing Prayer