



Sunday 17th May 2020

Notes from our Sunday Morning
Pre-recorded Worship

Opening Welcome

Hello and welcome to St Saviour's. We are so glad that you can join us today and we want to say a massive welcome to anyone joining for the first time.

Let's start with an opening prayer:

Dear Lord, we thank you that we can gather in your presence today. May your Spirit help us to be attentive to your voice today, and may you bless the service. In Jesus name, Amen.

Song

One Small Step

Verse 1

How small is this world compared to You God
How big are the plans that You've dreamed up for us
As You hear our hearts beat let us hear Your voice
We're chasing after You in all we do 5 4 3 2

Chorus

One small step
In this great big adventure with You
We're taking one small step
In this great big adventure with You
You light up the way and walk with us every day
We're taking one small step
In this great big adventure with You

Verse 2

Before all the earth and the skies had been made
You'd planned out our lives and You knew us by name
As You hear our hearts beat let us hear Your voice
We're chasing after You in all we do 5 4 3 2

Bridge

Brighter than the stars we'll shine
We'll shine for You
Brighter than the stars we'll shine
We'll shine for You

Song

My hope is built on nothing less (Cornerstone)

Verse 1

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly trust in Jesus' Name
(REPEAT)

Chorus

Christ alone cornerstone
Weak made strong in the Saviour's love
Through the storm He is Lord
Lord of all

Verse 2

When darkness seems to hide His face
I rest on His unchanging grace
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil
My anchor holds within the veil

Interlude

He is Lord Lord of all

Verse 3

When He shall come with trumpet sound
Oh may I then in Him be found
Dressed in His righteousness alone
Faultless stand before the throne

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Reflection

Let's take a moment now to pause and reflect on those words, that Jesus is our hope and cornerstone. As we do this, let's ask the Holy Spirit to come and fill us afresh. Spirit, help us to fix our eyes on Jesus, our cornerstone.

Prayers

We're now going to move to a time of prayer, where we lift up the needs of the world. Today's prayers have been prepared by some of our students. Let us pray.

Lord, we ask you to be with all those who are making sacrifices in order to keep the country running. Today in particular, we bring to mind those in the prison services, the police, and the NHS. We're so grateful for all they do and have done. We ask for your protection over them. Lord, we ask for you to be with all those who are struggling, for them to be comforted by you and for them to know your presence with them as they go about their daily lives. For those who don't yet know you, I pray that they will find your light and shelter which you offer. Thank you for all you do. Amen.

We pray for those who aren't finding this time easy; for those with existing physical or mental health conditions, those who are lonely or who have difficult home circumstances, and those grieving the loss of family members or friends. We lift up these people to you, and pray that you would comfort them. Help them to know that you care about them and that they're not alone. We recognise that we are in a difficult time, and being isolated from other people is really difficult. Please help us to find joy in the small things, and to love those around us. We pray this in your name. Amen.

We conclude with the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed by your name
Your kingdom come, your will be done
On earth as in heaven
Give us today our daily bread,
And forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin against us
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
Now and for ever. Amen

Reading: 1 John 2:15-17

¹⁵ Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. ¹⁶ For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷ The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

Talk by Lucy Webb

It's great to be with you! I know we all have our stories of how we are managing during lockdown, it's certainly been strange with a 3 month year old baby, but we are doing well and loving being part of our virtual church family.

So today we are continuing our series 'Building Family' by looking at what it means to be a 'Distinct Family'. Today we are going to look at the questions of why being a Jesus follower should involve

living a distinct life, how this might be possible, especially at the moment, and also what's the impact of us living distinctively.

In verse 15 John writes 'Do not love the world'. I don't know what your reaction to this is at the moment, maybe you are thinking I don't love the world right now, it's scary and dangerous. Or maybe you are thinking you do love the world, the affection and friendship, the acts of charity and bravery people are showing during coronavirus.

But we might also be thinking that it's strange to say do not love the world when in a well-known passage elsewhere, John writes that 'God so loved the world'. On the face of it, there seems a bit of a contradiction here - why does God get to so love the world and we are told not to?

We could just say, well it's up to God, God decides, and we are so different from God that the rules are different for us as opposed to God. Yes, we are really different, and God's love is a perfect love which is so much greater than what we have the capacity for, but I wonder if there is more to it than that. You see, in the culture John was writing, love also meant something more than what we think of. For us, love and hate are emotional words – how we feel about people and things. But biblically, love was about ultimate allegiances and priorities. To love something means it gets prime position in your life above everything else, and so that in comparison to that number one thing or person, every other thing pales in significance. And so, John isn't saying the world is bad and we shouldn't care about it, he's just saying that we must give our ultimate allegiance, our ultimate love to God.

It's a bit like when Jesus says 'no one can serve two masters, he will love the one and hate the other, you cannot serve God and money' or when he says to be his disciple 'you must hate your family'. He's not saying you must think mean things about them, want them to be destroyed and become your enemy or anything like that at all, he's just saying that God should hold the ultimate place in our lives making everything else come second.

And you know, I think John is telling us not to love the world and things in the world to help us, and to encourage us, not to have a go at us. John wants us to know the freedom and fullness of life that comes from living God's way. And what he is saying is that when we put our love for things or people before our love for God, we are the ones who lose out.

It's a bit like when I was a teenager, me and my friends would often go to house parties when friends' parents were out. And at an age when I was a little less responsible than I am now I would love to drink more than I should – getting drunk was kind of a fun thing to do. But you know what? A party is really about the people, and choosing to get too drunk meant I would miss out on the fun social element of the party – either because I was spaced out in the corner, being a bit embarrassing, and the next day I was so full of regret and remorse. I chose the lesser thing and was then not free to enjoy the better thing.

The same can be true for us in so many areas of our life – not just in loving food or drink too much, but even with people - Even if we love our families to the extent that they are our number one allegiance, priority, the only thing that gives us meaning and identity – well what happens when the kids leave home? What happens when the relationship breaks down? It's possible that when we place our allegiances, love and priorities even in these good and wonderful things, we can miss out on so much more that God has for us.

So, the point here isn't to stop loving people and the good gifts God has given us, the world isn't bad – it's just that we need to love appropriately – and this happens when we give our faith, trust and

allegiance to God before everything else. and when we do this, we get to enjoy the fullness of life, the freedom and goodness that Jesus had and Jesus brings for us all to have.

So those are a few thoughts on why we should live differently, but how do we do this?

Well back to 1 John 2 – John gives three examples of things that we might love over and above our love for God which will cause us problems, and not lead us to the eternal life God has promised for us. So let's look at those, and think about how we can avoid the temptation that each of them brings. First – he talks about lusts of the flesh. When we think lust we normally assume it's about sex, but its more than that – lusts of the flesh are anything that our senses desire in unhealthy amounts. I know that for me during lockdown I am having to keep an eye on my chocolate consumption, I wonder what that is for you? Perhaps lockdown has meant you're spending more time on your computer than before, and are becoming drawn to websites that you know are creating an unhealthy desire within you. Perhaps your mind has developed some unhealthy patterns and you have become fixated on one thing or another.

There are times when we need to look honestly at our lives, and if there are the beginnings of unhealthy desires bubbling away somewhere, we need to come clean, to ourselves and to God, but perhaps also to another person. We don't want to go down unhelpful paths by loving something 'of the world' too much, and in my experience, the best way to lose the hold that that thing has over us is to bring it out into the open, into the light of day.

I am lucky to have really good friends who in the past have noticed when I am showing signs of behaviour that come from unhealthy desires. They have been brave enough to question me about what I have been doing, and to hold me accountable. At first this is so painful – when other people see what's really going on, but actually, for me, it was the beginning of dealing with that desire so it no longer had a hold over me.

John then mentions a second 'lust' which is the lust of the eyes. this is interesting – it gets back to what happened in the Garden of Eden – where Adam and Eve saw that the apple was pleasing to the eye, they took it and ate it.

Interesting, but this doesn't relate to us, right? Think again - they wanted the thing they couldn't have and they put having that thing as their number one.

Does this sound like something we might do? Seeing something we like the look of and then pursuing it regardless of the consequences? This is what advertising is based on! And this is what a heck of a lot of social media encourages. That person has something that looks shiny and lovely and I want it – this is the message our world encourages.

I think during lockdown there is something specifically challenging here. We have been so limited in what we can and cannot do that the things we can do, we do more. Like spending time on social media. Now I know for me, social media can drastically affect my mood – when I see people sharing good news when I have had a particularly rubbish day, or being so proactive in their home baking, exercise, schooling or whatever.

A while ago I realised just what a distraction my phone can be, and especially how easy it was to browse social media and end up feeling worse about my life and so envious of other people's, I decided to delete all the apps off my phone because I could see the damage it was doing. And you know, I have a lot more time that I can now use more purposefully, doing things that I enjoy, doing things that bring me life giving joy rather than sucking me into the world of jealousy and envy.

Third on John's list is what he calls the 'Pride of life'. And so whereas we can often get envious of other people's seemingly great lives, on the other hand, we can also get pretty boastful about our own. It's pretty easy to brag either directly or indirectly about how great our lives are isn't it? And I think especially in our current situation we need to be careful about how this might impact on those who are struggling more than we are.

During the pandemic, I think we are all learning a lesson about the pride of life. We are all vulnerable to this virus, and we can't assume we will be immune. And that makes me think about how actually, I don't really have control over my life anyway, someone else could make me sick and I have no idea what the consequences of that will be. This isn't actually new – we never really can control our lives, but coronavirus has made this point for us loud and clear.

I know I need to be careful about putting too much stock in my own capabilities, strengths and achievements. As good as these are, they won't last for long, I won't last in this life for long. And for many of us, this time has made us feel super anxious and fearful, but actually, I wonder if we can reframe our thoughts – instead of becoming either boastful or anxious about my life, I am trying to keep grateful for everything that has been given to me each day and to appreciate that God is giving us good gifts even during this difficult time.

So there's a few thoughts on how we might put living distinctive lives into practice, but what's the impact? What does all of this achieve?

Well John spells it out for us – those who do the will of God will live forever. I think the truth is we are people who are made to love – we will always go looking for something to love. Writing over 1500 years ago, a great Christian leader, St Augustine said, 'Our hearts are restless until they rest in God'.

We won't find rest when we have other things as the focus of our love, our hearts will stay restless, unfulfilled, lacking peace, because all these things will ultimately fade and die. None of them will last forever. But God will. But God is infinite, God is eternal. God will not die – so when we choose to love God, we are beginning to participate in something eternal too.

And I don't think this is just saying when we do things God's way we will go to Heaven when we die, that's not the point. I think the point is, that when we put God and God's way of doing things first, we are becoming free from the things of this world that will keep us trapped, things that will change, fade and decay. God's way brings hope, joy and life in all its fullness now, all stuff that will last. So, when we do things God's way now we get to participate in the eternal now.

And I really believe that this doesn't just make a difference to our own lives, but other people will see our lives that are different, with capacity for peace, joy and fulfilment in this amazing way and be drawn in.

And this is what we are modelling on our communities right now. There are so many great examples – from people who are sacrificing their income and savings to help others, to those who signed up to deliver supplies to the vulnerable, to those who are just looking out for their neighbours. We can put into practice loving God right now in a way that will make a real difference in people's lives and point them towards the incredible love of God.

So what's the challenge or encouragement for you today? Do you need to deal with some of your unhealthy desires? Either through accountability, through taking action to avoid worldly

distractions? Or maybe you need to reframe your life through God's eternal perspective and instead of focusing on what you do or don't have, appreciate everything God gives as a good gift. Wherever you are at, my prayer is that as a family, we will encourage one another to love God about everything and then live out of the freedom and joy that God has for each one of us.

Song

Amazing Grace

Verse 1

Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost but now am found
Was blind but now I see

Verse 2

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

Verse 3

Through many dangers toils and snares
I have already come
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me home

Verse 4

The Lord has promised good to me
His Word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures

Verse 5

When we've been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we've first begun

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Family News

If you are struggling or would like some prayer, we are here to help and support you. Please let us know by contacting 01483 455333 or office@st-saviours.org.uk.

We're not currently allowed back in the building for public worship, and don't foresee this changing soon, so we will continue our pattern of online, pre-recorded worship. We will of course update you if this changes!

The Alpha course continues this week, do contact the church office if you'd like to join us or have any questions. This week's talk addresses "what we mean by God".

This week, we circulated a paper by Tearfund around how we can respond to the current pandemic; our individual responses and church's response to the opportunities and challenges. Contact us if you'd like to receive a copy.

Song

Raise a Hallelujah

Verse 1

I raise a hallelujah in the presence of my enemies
I raise a hallelujah louder than the unbelief
I raise a hallelujah my weapon is a melody
I raise a hallelujah Heaven comes to fight for me

Chorus

I'm gonna sing in the middle of the storm
Louder and louder you're gonna hear my praises roar
Up from the ashes hope will arise
Death is defeated the King is alive

Verse 2

I raise a hallelujah with everything inside of me
I raise a hallelujah I will watch the darkness flee
I raise a hallelujah in the middle of the mystery
I raise a hallelujah fear you lost your hold on me

Bridge

Sing a little louder (Sing a little louder)
Sing a little louder (Sing a little louder)
Sing a little louder (Sing a little louder)
Sing a little louder (Sing a little louder)

Bridge

Sing a little louder in the presence of my enemies
Sing a little louder louder than the unbelief

Sing a little louder my weapon is a melody
Sing a little louder Heaven comes to fight for me
(REPEAT)

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Close & Blessing

Thank you so much for joining us today, we hope God has spoken to you in some way. We would love to hear from you in the church office if you would like to receive some prayer this week. As we close, I'd like to remind you of our vision as a church; to Love God, Love People, and Make a Difference.

Let us pray. Lord God, I thank you that you've called us as your church, your body to be distinct. That we are marked by you, chosen and loved by you; your children. I pray this week that you would help us to be distinct, help us to be beacons of your light, to be courageous and shine brightly wherever we are. May you be our hope and our comfort and our rock in what can feel a difficult time. May you lead and guide us as you promised to do. In Jesus' name. Amen.

May the Lord bless you and keep you, and may his face shine upon you. We hope you have a wonderful week. God bless!