**Morning Praise @ Home 1st January 2023**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Readings Romans 12: 1 – 8 Matthew 28: 16 – 20

**Reflection from John**

A young police officer was taking his final exam at Hendon Police College in North London. The first three questions in this exam were relatively easy. And then he got to question four. Question four went like this:

*`You’re on patrol in outer London when an explosion occurs in a gas main in a nearby street. On investigation, you find that a large hole has been blown in the footpath and that there is an overturned van lying nearby. Inside the van there’s a strong smell of alcohol. Both occupants, a man and a woman, are injured. You recognise the woman as the wife of your Divisional Inspector, who is at present away in the United States.*

*A passing motorist stops to offer you assistance, but you realise that he is a man who’s wanted for armed robbery. Suddenly another man runs out of a nearby house shouting that his wife is expecting a baby and the shock of the explosion has made the birth imminent.*

*Another man is crying for help, having been blown into an adjacent canal by the explosion, and he cannot swim. Bearing in mind the provisions of the Mental Health Act, describe in a few words what actions you would take.’*

The police officer thought for a moment, picked up his pen and wrote: *`I would take off my uniform and mingle with the crowd……’*

It’s the difference, if you like, between a chrysalis and a chameleon. A chrysalis is a pupa that turns into a beautiful butterfly. A chameleon is a long-tailed lizard that changes colour according to the background it’s on. And that’s the temptation that we face: to be one thing, to be Christian if the environment is Christian; but if the environment is different, just to fit in with the background.

Now, AS CHRISTIANS we’re called not to fit in with the background but to be distinctive and in that sense different. Being different does not mean being odd. We’re not called to speak in some kind of weird religious language or to wear weird clothes; we’re called to be normal, fully alive in a relationship with God.

Romans 12 follows on from Paul’s explanation in the previous chapters of how we become followers of Jesus by embracing him through faith as our Lord and Saviour.

Romans 12:1 says THEREFORE…this is how you are to live!

**LISTEN TO ROMANS VERSES 1-2 in different versions**

**THE MESSAGE So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him.**

**JB PHILIPPS 12 1-2With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him. Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good…..**

**So, I have chosen Romans 12 verse 1 as our text for the year** and will preach on the same verse four times this year drawing out a different angle on each occasion.

**FIRSTLY,** BUILDING ON WHAT PAUL HAS SAID PREVIOUSLY HE MAKES IT PLAIN THAT FROM BEGINNING TO END WE ARE PUT RIGHT WITH GOD BY EMBRACING THE LOVE, MERCY AND GRACE FOUND IN JESUS.

I want us to do all we can this year TO HELP ONE ANOTHER to grow in our confidence in God and as we do so help others to get to know him.

I WILL LEAD AND MAKE AVAILABLE A SERIES OF EVENINGS ON THE UNFORCED RYTHMNS OF GRACE.

JESUS SAID IN MATTHEW 11 “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? **Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me — watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.** I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

This is not about simply being busy as a Church but drawing on God’s help and one another to do what God wants.

**SECONDLY,** FROM THAT STRONG FOUNDATION I WANT US TO GROW TO MATURITY IN FAITH TO BECOME FIRST RATE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS.

NOTE THAT ROMANS 12:1 has an interesting take on the word worship. **READ ROMANS 12:1**

It’s not just about attending worship, it’s about offering our entire life as an act of worship. An Act of self offering.

This means that we discover together what it is to follow Jesus not just when we gather but as we live out our faith clearly and graciously in the places of work and the community we occupy each day.

A SERIES OF EVENINGS at OUR HOME - TABLE TALK - *LIFE ON THE FRONT LINE*

THIS TIME TOMORROW – interviewing a member of the congregation on what the coming week involves for them and praying for them that they may bear the love of Christ wherever they go.

**THIRDLY**, I BELIEVE THE VERSES BEYOND OUR TEXT are about releasing groups and individuals to find new ways of serving God…to discover, release and exercise gifts and ministries which are new to us.

And to embrace those new gifts and ministries I think it is inevitable that we will be transformed as Christian communities in the process.

There are new things to take up and established ways of being church to lay to rest. That goes hand in hand with honouring God and laying down our preferred ways.

I explained at my interview that a leader of a growing Church had recently said to me that in order to grow the congregation had corporately decided to embrace change and lay down any things which got in the way of Growth. I trust that we will embrace that same outlook so that together we seek God’s very best not only for and from ourselves but for those we encounter day by day.

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession**

**FROM THE METHODIST COVENANT SERVICE AT NEW YEAR**

Beloved in Christ,

let us again claim for ourselves

this covenant which God has made with his people,

and take upon us the yoke of Christ.

This means that we are content

that he appoint us our place and work,

and that he himself be our reward.

Christ has many services to be done:

some are easy, others are difficult;

some bring honour, others bring reproach;

some are suitable to our natural inclinations and material interests,

others are contrary to both;

in some we may please Christ and please ourselves;

in others we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves.

Yet the power to do all these things is given to us in Christ,

who strengthens us.

Therefore let us make this covenant of God our own.

Let us give ourselves to him,

trusting in his promises and relying on his grace.

Lord God, holy Father,

since you have called us through Christ

to share in this gracious covenant,

we take upon ourselves with joy the yoke of obedience

and, for love of you,

engage ourselves to seek and do your perfect will.

We are no longer our own but yours.

**I am no longer my own but yours.**

**Put me to what you will,**

**rank me with whom you will;**

**put me to doing,**

**put me to suffering;**

**let me be employed for you**

**or laid aside for you,**

**exalted for you**

**or brought low for you;**

**let me be full,**

**let me be empty,**

**let me have all things,**

**let me have nothing;**

**I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things**

**to your pleasure and disposal.**

**And now, glorious and blessèd God,**

**Father, Son and Holy Spirit,**

**you are mine and I am yours.**

**So be it.**

**And the covenant now made on earth,**

**let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**