**Morning Praise @ Home 19th January 2025**

**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**  **Exodus 19:3-6 John 15:5-16**

### Reflection from John LIVING ON PURPOSE

When growing up were you raised in a culture of encouragement or criticism?

Have you ever worked in a setting which could be described as having a blame culture? It’s not pleasant is it? It makes us anxious.

By way of contrast; let me take you into the heart of the Gospel of John.

Nestled within the fifteenth chapter lies a verse of profound assurance and purpose: John 15:16, a cornerstone of faith— a relationship initiated not by human choice, but by divine affection and choice. This verse is not merely a reminder of our chosen status; it is a call to a life of fruitful action and lasting legacy.

This is the verse I have chosen for 2025.

**You did not choose me but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last.** *John 15:16*

And in another translation

“You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and I have appointed and placed and purposefully planted you, so that you would go and bear fruit and keep on bearing, and that your fruit will remain and be lasting”

In other words from the very start of a Christian’s relationship with the Lord Jesus.

* He wants us on his team - he chooses us – we are his.
* He longs to know us and nurture us and cherish us.

It’s an amazing reversal of roles where the Creator of the universe reaches down to individuals, with purpose and intentionality. This choice is not based on merit or achievement but is rooted in grace and love.‬‬‬‬‬‬‬

The verse then unfolds the purpose of God’s action: “I have **appointed** and **placed** and **purposefully planted you**, so that you would go and bear fruit and keep on bearing.” Here, the metaphor of being planted suggests stability, growth, and blossoming where one is positioned.

Like a gardener who carefully chooses where to plant each seed to maximize its growth potential, so God places us in environments where our unique talents and gifts can flourish for the common good.

Bearing fruit is an active, ongoing process that requires patience, nurturing, and care. In the spiritual sense, this fruit can manifest as acts of kindness, justice, mercy, and courage. It encompasses both our actions and our character development as we grow more compassionate, just, and resilient. The expectation to “keep on bearing” fruit also implies that this is not a temporary or one-time act but a lifelong commitment to living out one’s faith through tangible, positive contributions to the world.

John 15:16 is not just a passive declaration of us being chosen; it is a mobilizing command to all of us together to live a life that mirrors the love and purpose of Christ. It is about making a difference, serving others, and leaving behind a legacy that lasts. This *chosenness* invites us into a story bigger than ourselves, one where our individual stories intertwine with God’s story.

All of this brings to us both comfort and a challenge — a comfort in being personally selected by God and a challenge to live up to the purpose for which we were chosen. As we ponder this scripture, may we embrace the fullness of its implications, allowing the reality of being chosen to seep into our very bones and energize our every action.

You see being a genuine Christian is not a happy accident of birth or background, God calls us to know and follow Christ so that our lives are full of purpose. Being a genuine Christian is not about finding some space in our lives for God but instead it’s about remoulding our lives and our goals with God at the centre so that all of life – ours and others – are transformed. That shift is really life changing.

Applying John 15:16 to your daily life involves embracing the reality of being chosen by God and living out the purposes for which you’ve been appointed.

Here are some practical ways to integrate this scripture into our everyday actions:

1. Recognize Your Value: Start each day by reminding yourself that you are chosen by God not because of your achievements, but because of His love and grace. This realization can bring a profound sense of purpose and self-worth that transcends the ups and downs of daily life.

2. Cultivate Spiritual Growth: Just as a gardener nurtures plants, invest in your own spiritual growth through regular prayer, meditation on scriptures, and participation in community worship. These practices can help you stay connected to God and grow in faith and character.

3. Bear Fruit in Your Actions: Identify ways to make positive contributions to those around you. This could be through acts of kindness, volunteering, offering support to friends and family, or advocating for justice in your community. Look for opportunities where your unique talents and abilities can meet the needs of others.

4. Develop Resilience and Patience: Bearing fruit often calls for perseverance. Develop resilience by facing challenges with faith and patience, trusting in God’s timing and plan.

5. Maintain Long-Term Commitment: Understand that bearing fruit is a lifelong process. Commit to long-term goals that align with your faith and values, and strive to make consistent, positive impacts in your personal and professional life.

6. Align Your Goals and Aims with God’s Will: Work to align your desires more closely with what God wants for your life. This might mean changing your priorities, reassessing your goals, or taking steps to heal and improve relationships.

7. Build a Lasting Legacy: Think about the legacy you want to leave. Focus on planting seeds that will grow beyond your own lifetime whether that’s through mentoring others, supporting causes you care about, or living out values that inspire those around. **Amen**

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**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 led by Sue**

Lord God, thank you for the freedom we have in coming publicly before you, gathering to give thanks, to worship and to ask for your help as we recognise our own limitations. Please help us through the coming week to keep praying for the concerns we raise before you now, having chosen us to bear your fruit:

*LORD IN YOUR MERCY*: **HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

**Heavenly Father**,

* We give you thanks that a ceasefire has at last been declared between Israel and Gaza and pray that it is maintained. We pray that nations around the world will be generous in supporting the rebuilding of neighbourhoods following the devastation we have witnessed on our TV screens. But Lord, above all we pray for a rebuilding of hearts and minds, that love and forgiveness will overcome understandable bitterness and mistrust as communities try to start afresh.
* There is soon to be a shift in power as a new administration runs America. We pray that people of integrity will be effective in making your voice heard when decisions are made about dealing with the poor and the vulnerable, with those seeking a better life, with other nations which possess resources. May the laws of justice prevail. We also pray that generosity and good faith will continue to characterise dealings with Ukraine.
* In this country we lift before you everyone working in - and administrating - the NHS, who are under such pressure. May they know your strength, love and guidance as they work out the best way to deal with the sick and vulnerable. Give them your compassion and patience when their own is stretched thin.

*LORD IN YOUR MERCY*: **HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

**Lord Jesus**,

* The church is your body here on earth, seeking to shine your light effectively to the world. We are under observation. As he takes on huge new responsibilities, please uphold Archbishop Stephen Cottrell, who is filling the vacancy left by Justin Welby’s resignation. We pray that the different wings of the church will be gracious to one another, seeking to find unity in the way forward rather than disharmony, and that you will endow all those who need to make decisions with wisdom and godly authority, that the church may be guided by your will.
* We pray for Christians in Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia, India and Sudan, just a few of the countries where your children face extreme persecution. We pray that, as these underground communities of faith grow, so there you will prompt individuals to step up as leaders, equipping them to teach and pastor courageously, despite the dangers.
* We pray the same in this country where few are coming forward to explore church leadership and ordination. Please inspire a fresh generation to take your church forward into the next quarter of the 21st century.

*LORD IN YOUR MERCY*: **HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

**Holy Spirit**,

* Help each of us here, each of your followers locally, to see the path that you have appointed us to walk. As we depend on you, who unifies us all, may we encourage each other’s ministries through prayer and word and deed. Help us to see others as you see them, recognising their gifts and freeing up opportunities for their spiritual fruit to be developed.
* Comfort, we pray, the many who face sickness and bereavement at this time of the year. We lift up to you those known to us … and pray that you also prompt us individually to help out where we can as their supporters, offering practical help or a listening ear.
* We pray for families who are struggling in our community – with money worries, with mental health issues, with fractured relationships and marital breakdown. Lord, in the occasional moments of respite, please come alongside and ease their burdens. Also please give us perceptive ears and eyes to see where we might shine your light in that darkness.

*LORD IN YOUR MERCY*: **HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

Father, Son and Spirit, thank you that our life is not up to us but up to you – that we are in your wise hands and safe embrace. Help us to live out what we have said Amen to today.

*MERCIFUL FATHER*: **ACCEPT THESE PRAYERS FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR SON, OUR SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST. 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**