**Worshipping together while apart**

**Morning Prayer for Wednesday 3 February 2021**

***Readings***

**Psalm 103:1-2, 13-18**

**1 John 3 v11 to 4 v5**

This is the word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

***Some reflections this passage.***

“Love is of God and those who are God’s children are to love each other and to listen to God’s truth”

Reading John’s epistle is full of good news, just as his Gospel is full of good news. One of his most helpful insights is that “we know that we have passed out of death into life when we love”

Yet in 1 John 3:14 John speaks of Cain, a reference to Genesis chapter 4 verses 1-12 describing how Cain murdered his brother Abel from jealously of one sort or another. John is saying that sadly Cain’s actions showed that he belonged to the devil, the evil one.

From John’s experience of Jesus, not just in the two or three years of his ministry, but in the post- crucifixion years when his discipleship and love were not only unbroken but progressively intimate and creative; he learnt the simple truth that God is love. So, John learnt to love from Jesus himself, seeing and knowing His life and example and John felt the continuing love of Jesus, even after Jesus was no longer visible physically. John came to see and realize that he was more fully and happily alive when he loved, more so even than when he himself was loved.

There is something in human nature that cries out for love; it is that spark or seed of the divine implanted in everyone. We need to be loved. We need to hear a voice within us saying “You are my beloved child in spite of the past, in spite of the mess you may have made of life so far. I will never let you go, because I love you.” So, John’s concern with sound teaching was not merely about theory.

No. John saw it as highly practical, hence his constant reiteration of the theme of love, that the source of love is God; and everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. God is love and God showed his love among us for he sent His only Son into the world that we might have life through him.

This is what love is, not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to atone for our sins. If God so loved us, we must love one another; we do this by being a neighbour to the other person, by being welcoming and hospitable, by journeying with the other person and being affirmative and encouraging; thus, we can reflect hope to others.  They may need to experience love and reconciliation.

They may also need to discover that the darker aspects of their past and present can be forgiven. They need to know that God’s love is unconditional, that they are embraced not for what they have or have not achieved, but for who they are. Christ lovingly remakes us, reforms us, heals us and strengthens us. God does not wait for perfect people when He wants us to serve Him.

The Holy Spirit is the outpouring of God’s love surrounding and entering our inner being; it is a tolerant, peaceful love, full of long suffering and gentleness, working quietly, able to wait for results, faithful, devoted and constant; such is the love of God . We need to come with our disappointments, our failures and mistakes to a place of acknowledgement and unburdening. God does not require a pure heart before approaching us. God is a God of mercy and a God of grace.

In Chapter 3 verses 16 to 24 John writes that Jesus Christ laid down his life for us, therefore we ought to lay down our lives, ourselves for our brothers and sisters.  John was writing his epistle in the years between AD85 and AD95 when Domitian, a ruler implementing persecution and oppression, was Roman Emperor. Therefore, when John mentions material possessions and his brothers in need, he clearly had in mind the plight of the poor and needy in society, as well as those among the Christian community. It would seem that among the civic notables and upper classes, there was more of a sense of concern for the nourishment of the city and its embellishment rather than for the poor and needy.

In Chapter 4 verse 2 John writes that Jesus Christ is come “in the flesh and it is good news.” The Word became human and lived a human life like ours.  Here we have the evidence of our own eyes; we speak as witnesses and we tell you the secret of real life; life lived in the presence of God, our Father, now revealed to us. Here John is speaking of those who are denying Jesus’s humanity.

For John, being a Christian is believing in God, and God believing in us. There will be those who do not want to hear or believe. Nevertheless, the command is to believe in Jesus, the Son of God. and if we have faith in Jesus as the Son of God, then we have His life in us. The task of a Christian is to be deeply involved in the world and always to see it in the light of our relationship with God.

St Gregory the Great is reported to have said, “As often as I go to God, I am sent to people; and as often as I go to people, I am sent to God meaning that the gift of God cannot be received to be merely enjoyed, it must always be shared.

During Advent in December, I decided to write my own personal Magnificat to God. The Magnificat is part of the liturgy in the Evening Prayer service in the Book of Common Prayer. I have always found comfort in this passage which is Mary’s Song in Luke’s Gospel Chapter1 verses 46 to 53.

This is my prayer for today:

“My soul doth magnify the Lord. and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour”

You are present at all times and in all places.  Without you I lose my way.  I lay before you my life, all my yesterdays, todays and tomorrows. I praise and thank you for your presence in my life. I give you every relationship, every situation in my life, all my outbursts of joy and of anger, all my moments of elation and despair. I lay before you my frail thoughts, questions and aspirations. I give you all my searching and striving, my grasping after truth. I acknowledge you to be the truth, truth in its entirety, truth can set me free.

Help me to know that beneath me are your everlasting arms, bearing me up. Be the Lord of my thoughts and feelings.  Holy Spirit, source of all truth, giver of strength and power. Come upon me now, as a gentle dove or like tongues of living fire, or as a mighty roaring wave.  Come and dwell within me. Enable me now to do those things which before were impossible.  Unworthy as I am, keep me faithful that I may show forth your love and your light in all that I try to be and endeavour to do.  God be with me today and always.

 Glory be to you, Father, glory be to you, Lord Jesus Christ and glory be to the Holy Spirit, Amen

**What is God saying to you through these readings and reflections?**

**What does God want you to do about it?**

***Collect for Epiphany 4***

God of heaven, you send the gospel to the ends of the earth

and your messengers to every nation: send your Holy Spirit to transform us

by the good news of everlasting life in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

***Intercessions***

**Our prayer O Lord**. **Maranatha – Come Lord Jesus**

You are the Lord who comes. You do not stay away. You are not afar off. You come to us often unawares, gently entering our life to share our joys, our pains. You come as an unseen guest at every meal. You come as our companion on every journey. You come watching over us at sleep at night, You come to share our life, not to intrude, nor to impose your will.  You come with tenderness and love to share and care and listen, to assure us that we are not alone, living our life in isolation. You come you mighty one, and knock on the door of our heart, persistently, patiently, lovingly. You stand, you wait at the door you have chosen. You have come that we might have life in all its abundance. You have taken the initiative.  You have drawn close. You come, calling our name, seeking to touch us, seeking to breathe on us, seeking to give us your Spirit, that we might be healed. You come to share our life and being. You come in silence, yearning for our response, waiting for our “Yes”. Almighty God, beyond our grasp, towering high in all infinity, you do not always come in grandeur and glorious splendour. You come as a little child, helpless, poor and weak sharing our humanity in Jesus. You come with arms stretched out upon a cross, and in the darkest hour you come to bear our burdens and the heavy load of an agonising world crushed with anguish and fear. Come our Lord and lead us out of darkness into light. Come O Lord and walk with us and reign

in us and over all the earth. **Come Lord Jesus, Come, Amen**

**A prayer for those who mourn (the 100,000 Covid related patients who’ve died)**

Gracious God, as we remember before you the thousands who have died,
surround us and all who mourn with your strong compassion. Be gentle with us in our grief, protect us from despair, and give us grace to persevere and face the future with hope in Jesus Christ our risen Lord.
**Amen.**

*Alternatively, you might like to use these prayers*

Let us pray to God, who alone makes us dwell in safety:

For all who are affected by coronavirus,

through illness or isolation or anxiety,

that they may find relief and recovery:

Lord, hear us,

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For those who are guiding our nation at this time,

and shaping national policies,

that they may make wise decisions:

Lord, hear us,

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For doctors, nurses and medical researchers,

that through their skill and insights

many will be restored to health:

Lord, hear us,

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For the vulnerable and the fearful,

for the gravely ill and the dying,

that they may know your comfort and peace:

Lord, hear us,

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for our parish of Bourne End and all who live and work in this parish. We especially pray for the roads of of Bourne End Lane and Pouchen End Lane. May all who live in these roads know your strength and peace this day. Lord, hear us, **Lord, graciously hear us.**

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,

to the mercy and protection of God.

**Merciful Father, accept these prayers**

**for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**