

# THE CAMEL-ALLEN CHURCHES

WORSHIP AT HOME – SUNDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2020



## Call to Worship

The heart of God, how could we name it?  
In songs of praise, in psalms of joy, in stories of grace,  
in waving trees and craggy cliffs  
and flowers along the lanes,  
in a hand stretched out on a city street  
and everlasting sweeps of mountain grandeur.

The heart of God, how could we name it?  
In the tender softness of the face of a new child  
and the wrinkles of life on the hand of the old,  
in the hidden kindness of a neighbour  
and the costly love of those who serve.

**In the heart of God lies all good and truth.**

**The heart of God is beyond our naming.**

**Let us worship God.**

## Prayer of Invocation

Be found within our hearts today, O God.  
Be seen there in all that we do  
and all that we are for each other this day.  
Come and stay with us,  
deep within the inner life of each one  
and carried forth into the world  
which always waits for your coming. **Amen**

## Hymn

Be still for the presence of the Lord  
The holy one is here  
Come bow before him now  
With reverence and fear  
In him no sin is found  
We stand on holy ground  
Be still for the presence of the Lord  
The holy one is here

Be still for the glory of the Lord  
Is shining all around  
He burns with holy fire  
With splendour he is crowned  
How awesome is the sight  
Our radiant king of light  
Be still for the glory of the Lord  
Is shining all around

Be still for the power of the Lord  
Is moving in this place  
He comes to cleanse and heal  
To minister his grace  
No work too hard for him  
In faith receive from him  
Be still for the power of the Lord  
Is moving in this place

## Confession

Dear God, sometimes we fool ourselves.

We confess that sometimes we tell ourselves that we are engaged in your life when our actions have become an empty shell of habit and tradition.

**Forgive us, O God.**

We may have looked upon others in judgement, because they do not do as we do, and have failed to see their hearts:

**Forgive us, O God.**

Sometimes we are harsh with ourselves, condemning our own faltering journey towards honest and authentic relationship with you when you do not condemn us at all:

**Forgive us, O God.**

And sometimes we stand alongside those who have become the people of the law, rather than the people of your loving heart and spirit and fail to see what is important and what is not:

**Forgive our lack of courage and poverty of spirit, O God.**

**Amen**

## Assurance of Forgiveness

The God we love looks on the heart and sees the truth of our longing for forgiveness, the struggle of our varying journeys and all the complexities of our life.

Trust this God, the God of grace.

We are forgiven!

**Amen**



## Bible Readings

### Matthew 18.21-35 - Forgiveness

*<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' <sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.'*

*<sup>23</sup> 'For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. <sup>24</sup> When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; <sup>25</sup> and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. <sup>26</sup> So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." <sup>27</sup> And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. <sup>28</sup> But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, "Pay what you owe." <sup>29</sup> Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you." <sup>30</sup> But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt. <sup>31</sup> When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. <sup>32</sup> Then his lord summoned him and said to him, "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. <sup>33</sup> Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?" <sup>34</sup> And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt. <sup>35</sup> So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'*

## Romans 14.1-12 - Do Not Judge Another

*<sup>14.1</sup>Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions. <sup>2</sup>Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. <sup>3</sup>Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgement on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. <sup>4</sup>Who are you to pass judgement on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.*

*<sup>5</sup>Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. <sup>6</sup>Those who observe the day, observe it in honour of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honour of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honour of the Lord and give thanks to God.*

*<sup>7</sup>We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. <sup>8</sup>If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. <sup>9</sup>For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.*

*<sup>10</sup>Why do you pass judgement on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgement seat of God. <sup>11</sup>For it is written, 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.'*

*<sup>12</sup>So then, each of us will be accountable to God.*



## Reflection

In recent weeks we have been reflecting together on characteristics of the Christian way of life looking in particular at those mentioned in our readings from the letter to the Romans, asking: In view of who we are as the church – the people of God - how then should we live?

And so this week: To be a vegetarian, or not to be? Is that the question? You might be forgiven for thinking so after the reading above, but of course that is just an example not the main issue! The subtitles in the Bible though not a part of scripture, give a clue: 'Forgiveness' and 'do not judge another' - and you can see why the Lectionary writers have put these passages together, because the two overlap: not judging one another, tolerance, acceptance and forgiveness are interwoven – the one often requires the other.

It starts with how we treat one another in the Church community. 'If another member of the church sins against me how often should I forgive?' The disciples ask. 'Why do you pass judgement on your brother or sister?' Paul asks the Roman believers. Here in the church family is where it is often most difficult to make allowances, to accept those who are different from us, to allow different opinions and ways of doing things, even different beliefs and yet not be intolerant and judgemental. We need to work at it. Yes, hopefully we have many things in common, but these are not necessarily the superficial things. We are not a people who are bound together by being identical or by even by liking the same things, but by the forgiveness of Christ being released in our lives and the love of God in our hearts – both evidenced by and worked out by how we live: including how we treat one another when we don't agree.

Looking to build one another up, considering others better than ourselves, putting the needs of others first and when we get it wrong, as we will, being ready to give and receive forgiveness seventy times

seven. We can *choose* to exercise these characteristics to respond in these ways – we won't always succeed of course, but the more we choose them the more we practice them, the more habitual and natural they will become.

Of course there is a line, there are things that we should not tolerate: those things that God calls sin, those attitudes that bring division and hurt and dis-harmony. But we need to be very careful and check regularly that our prejudices are not creeping in to distort our thinking. Thankfully we are never too old to change – it's part of that transformation of our minds that we are both called to and offered, so we can see things Gods way!

And if it starts amongst us here in the church, it doesn't end here. The church is amongst other things a microcosm and a model for life lived in the Kingdom, life lived God's way, and so the kind tolerant, forgiving loving ways that we practise with one another should spill-out into our lives in the wider community and model God's kingdom life to the world. Our lives must match up to our message, if we work in partnership with the Spirit they can - to the glory and praise of God.



### Prayer of Thanksgiving

O God, we are thankful that you do not see us as others see us, or sometimes even as we see ourselves. So often we are less loving than you are and our judgements are harsh and wounding. We come to you with grateful hearts and celebrate that because you are God, you are more than we can ever be. **Amen**

### Hymn

All praise to our redeeming Lord,  
who joins us by his grace,  
and bids us, each to each restored,  
together seek his face.

He bids us build each other up;  
and, gathered into one,  
to our high calling's glorious hope  
we hand in hand go on.

The gift which he on one bestows,  
we all delight to prove;  
the grace through every vessel flows,  
in purest streams of love.

We all partake the joy of one,  
the common peace we feel,  
a peace to sensual minds unknown,  
a joy unspeakable.

And if our fellowship below  
in Jesus be so sweet,  
what heights of rapture shall we know  
when round his throne we meet!

### Prayers of Intercession

There are moments, O God,  
when we long to reach out and touch the world with your love,  
when our souls burn with the fire of your passion for your  
whole creation.

We look upon the people and recognise that they are made in your image,  
due to honour and deep respect as the struggle on  
in the toil and rewards of human life.

*Silence*

In faith we pray for them today.  
Because you have been faithful to us,  
we know that you will be present with them too.  
These are the ones who we are concerned for today....



*Name those you are concerned for...*

Take each one in your hand today, O God,  
and do not let them fall.  
Care for them as you do each sparrow and lily of the field,  
cherishing them on their way and watching over them.

*We say the Lord's prayer: Our Father who art in heaven...*

Come close to us too, O God.  
Come into our hearts and search out our deepest unsaid  
prayers,  
for sometimes we dare not even ask for what we need,  
or we do not know what it is that will help us.  
Be present with us this day, O God.  
In the name of Christ. **Amen**

**Hymn**

Make me a channel of your peace  
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love  
Where there is injury, your pardon Lord

And where there's doubt, true faith in you

O Master grant that I may never seek  
So much to be consoled as to console  
To be understood as to understand  
To be loved as to love with all my soul

Make me a channel of your peace  
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope  
Where there is darkness, only light  
And where there's sadness ever joy

Make me a channel of your peace  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned  
In giving to all men that we receive  
And in dying that we are born to eternal life

### **Commissioning**

Follow your hearts into the paths of mercy, for so is the heart of God.  
Follow you souls into the way of truth, truth revealed within the heart  
of the Spirit of God.  
Go in faith.

### **Blessing**

And may the places where you walk  
become sacred spaces of the Holy God,  
the places where you take your stand  
be signposts to the love of Christ,  
the places where you rest  
be filled with the renewing grace of the Spirit. **Amen**

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