**Service 24th May 2020**

**Welcome and opening words**

Welcome to worship. I was reminded this week that I have never said who I am! I am Revd Richard Bradley a minister in the Rochdale, Bury and North Manchester Missional Partnership.  
Wherever and whenever you are part of this act of worship you are most welcome.

Jesus said: **“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”** (John 8:12 - NRSV)

With those words in mind we sing:

**Opening Song: Christ be our light**

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| 1.. Longing for light, we wait in darkness.  Longing for truth, we turn to you.  Make us your own, your holy people,  light for the world to see. | 2.. Longing for peace, our world is troubled.  Longing for hope, many despair.  Your word alone has power to save us.  Make us your living voice. |
| 3.. Longing for food, many are hungry.  Longing for water, many still thirst.  Make us your bread, broken for others,  shared until all are fed. | 4.. Longing for shelter, many are homeless.  Longing for warmth, many are cold.  Make us your building, sheltering others,  walls made of living stone. |
| 5.. Many the gifts, many the people,  many the hearts that yearn to belong.  Let us be servants to one another,  making your kingdom come. | Chorus: *Christ, be our light!*  *Shine in our hearts.*  *Shine through the darkness.*  *Christ, be our light!*  *Shine in your church gathered today.\_* |
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We now come to a time of prayer…..

**Prayers of Adoration and Confession**

Our loving heavenly Father, you have given us everything we have, and all that we need. We come before you in our separate homes, but together as part of your family to worship you, and ask that you will lift us up by your Holy Spirit within, and fill our hearts with praise.

We thank you for the glory of your creation, and for hearts and minds to appreciate its vastness and its beauty, from the farthest stars to the smallest flower.

Thankyou for your word in the Bible, and for the greatest gift of your son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who we can read about in its pages, who we can know in our hearts, by faith in his death and resurrection, and through whom we have the tremendous privilege of being called your children. Thankyou for all the details and reminders of his love, which enrich our lives, even when the going is difficult.

But Lord, we have to confess before you our many weaknesses. Bring to our minds the thoughts, words and desires of our hearts this past week, and make us aware of how we have fallen short of your glory. Forgive us when we have been carried away with the routines of the day, and have not stopped to thank you for every new day, and for your constant presence with us. Forgive us when our faith is weak, so that in our believing and trusting we have denied your grace and power. Forgive us when we have spent far more time seeking our own pleasure than caring for the needs of others. Forgive us for not being in tune with your spirit, so that we miss opportunities to share our faith with others, and for the times when we lack the courage.

As we have confessed our weaknesses Lord, help us to know and feel your forgiveness, which you have promised through the sacrifice of Jesus our Saviour. May we grow to be more like him every day, by the power of his Holy Spirit within.

Amen.

We hear our Bible reading from:

**Bible Reading: Colossians 4.7-18**

**Final greetings**

7 Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. 8 I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. 9 He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

10 My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) 11 Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. 12 Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. 13 I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. 14 Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. 15 Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

16 After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

17 Tell Archippus: ‘See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord.’

18 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Thanks be to God for His Word.

We sing our next song:

**Song: I see the king of glory**

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| 1.. I see the king of glory  coming on the clouds with fire,  the whole earth shakes,  the whole earth shakes.  I see His love and mercy  washing over all our sin;  the people sing, the people sing: | *Hosanna, hosanna,*  *Hosanna in the highest.*  *Hosanna, hosanna,*  *Hosanna in the highest.* |
| 2.. I see a generation  rising up to take their place,  with selfless faith, with selfless faith.  I see a near revival  stirring as we pray and seek;  we're on our knees, we're on our knees | *Hosanna, hosanna,*  *Hosanna in the highest.*  *Hosanna, hosanna,*  *Hosanna in the highest.* |
| 3.. Heal my heart and make it clean;  open up my eyes to the things unseen.  Show me how to love like You have loved me.  Break my heart for what breaks Yours;  everything I am for Your kingdom's cause.  As I walk from earth into eternity. | *Hosanna, hosanna,*  *Hosanna in the highest.*  *Hosanna, hosanna,*  *Hosanna in the highest.*  *Hosanna, hosanna,*  *hosanna in the highest, Hosanna, hosanna*  *hosanna in the highest.*  *Hosanna in the highest,*  *hosanna in the highest.* |
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**Reflecting together:**

Let’s pray: Lord, open our hearts to your Word and your Word to our hearts. Amen.

In our reading today we heard 12 verses of scripture read, we heard 286 words of scripture and contained in them were 11 individuals that Paul mentions/names.

They are: Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Mark, Barnabas, Jesus (Justus), Epaphras, Luke, Demas, Nympha and Archippus.

Some we hear a little about some of the 11 where others get only a very passing mention. But all are named and it seems that Paul appreciates the work that they have done/are doing for the kingdom of God.

I want us to focus on 3 of them this morning as we come to the end of our series on Colossians.

The first I want us to focus on is:

1. **Tychicus**

In verse 7 we read: **“Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.”** (Colossians 4:7 – NIV)

Paul is always eager to share his own news with them as much as he is likes to hear news of the churches he was in some way a part of.

I would imagine the Colossian Christians would have concern for Paul as he is in prison in Rome – so Paul wants Tychicus to update them on Paul’s news.

But the Church may not know much about Tychicus. For Paul qualifies, to some degree, who Tychicus is.

For Paul, the church wherever it is - is family. And Tychicus is part of that family he is a **“dear *brother*”** Paul says. In other words, he is one of them/us. He is trustworthy as a fellow believer and will brings wise words to the Colossians.

He is a faithful minister and a fellow servant in the Lord. Paul isn’t painting this man as somehow *better* or *more qualified* in being a Christian…but Paul is saying that he is faithful, he can be trusted and he comes with Paul’s authority and approval.

As we saw earlier in our reflecting and as I have mentioned previously, the Colossian Christians were being led from the path of faith and trust in Christ to a belief system that suggested knowing God came through some special knowledge (Gnosticism). So Paul, gives a bit of a reference for Tychicus so that the Colossians will accept him and the word/letter that he brings from Paul and delivers to the people.

*I wonder, can you think of faithful brothers/sisters in the Lord? Those who are/have been faithful ministers (and I don’t mean dog collar ministers) but, as Paul says, faithful servants of the Lord?*

*I certainly can. There are many from my upbringing who faithfully served the young people at my home church….who faithfully served the older people in the congregation and those along that age spectrum.*

*And now, we are the people in the church today. In our individual places of worship, we are the people who have been handed the baton of faith. We are the ones who, like Tychicus, are called to continue the preaching of God’s Word in word and action so that others may come to know and follow Jesus.*

Are we like Tychicus or could we do more?

1. **Mark**

This Mark is the writer of the 2nd gospel. In verse 10 we read: **“My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)”** (Colossians 4:10 – NIV)

Mark is mentioned in Acts 13:13 as he went on a Missionary Journey with Paul (and Barnabas) but Mark (called “John” in the NIV – full name John Mark) had to leave the missionary trip early. Some suggest that Paul and Mark might have had a falling out over something!

*Now I know this would seem highly unusual for any fall out or disagreement in the church! I am sure we are all sat listening now thinking…. “we never disagree or fall out in our church!” (I say with a wry smile😊 on his face!!)*

*The reality is we do! Like we do in our family/home life so it can happen in the church too. And Paul and others in the Bible were as susceptible as we are today. But Paul and Mark, whatever their fallout, were reconciled (as Mark was back on the missionary journey which you can read about in Philemon 24)*

When there are fallouts in the church we need to do all we can to be reconciled with one another.

Fallouts don’t mean we can’t be used by God. We must play our part in reconciliation so that we are in the right place with God so that we can be effective and loyal servants of Jesus.

Is there someone for who you need to be reconciled? Pray that God will give you the opportunity to be reconciled.

1. **Epaphras**

He is not the first name that comes from our lips when we think of faithful servants of Christ.

But he is certainly highly regarded by Paul. Epaphras clearly has a deep love and concern for the Colossian Christians/Church.

At the very start of the letter in Colossians 1:7 in Paul’s section headed in the NIV translation as *“Thanksgiving and Prayer”* Paul says: **“6 ...All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God’s grace in all its truth. 7 You learned it from *Epaphras*, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf…”** (Colossians 1:6b-7 – NIV (italics mine))

Epaphras was clearly someone who was committed to the Colossian church and taught them about the love of Christ.

Not only did Epaphras teach the Colossian Christians he is now commended by Paul for his prayerfulness as he holds the Colossians Christians in prayer. Paul says of Epaphras, **“He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.”** (Colossians 4:12b - NIV)

What a prayer that is from Epaphras! How often do we pray for one another that we would stand firm in the gospel and in the will of God? How often do we pray that we would be mature and fully assured? I want to ask you to consider 2 questions….

What is your prayer for your Church at this time?

What is your prayer for the wider church at this time?

The final words from Paul in this letter encourage the reading of this letter in Laodicea as well as Colossae. That says something to me about the sharing of the Good News and the sharing of our journeys of faith. It says something about how we are not alone on our journey, but we journey with others and support each other on this journey.

A journey that is not always easy but a journey that, when committed to, means we have the assurance of God’s presence and love as we walk. And, of course, the amazing assurance of everlasting life only possible in and through Jesus Christ.

So friends, what we will you take with you from these last 6 Sundays as we have explored this letter?

I hope that we can all say we have got something from these amazing words to encourage us on our faith journey. I hope we can all say that we long to continue to serve Jesus more in our lives and our communities.

May we all know the love and presence of Jesus as we continue to journey with him.

In His name and for the sake of Christ’s Kingdom!

Amen.

Let’s pray….

Journeying God, you call us and equip us to be your servants. May we be faithful followers as we journey with Jesus. We thank you for what we have explored and learnt together as we have studied and reflected on the letter to the Colossians. May the words we have read and the words we have reflected on – You Words, Lord – continue to change and transform us.

Amen.

**Song: I want to serve the purpose of God**

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| 1.. I want to serve the purpose of God in my generation.  I want to serve the purpose of God while I am alive.  I want to give my life, for something that will last forever,  O, I delight, I delight to do Your will. | 2.. I want to build with silver and gold in my generation.  I want to build with silver and gold while I am alive.  I want to give my life for something that will last forever,  O, I delight, I delight to do Your will. |
| 3.. I want to see the Kingdom of God in my generation.  I want to see the Kingdom of God while I am alive.  I want to give my life for something that will last forever,  O, I delight, I delight to do Your will. | 4.. I want to see the Lord come again in my generation.  I want to see the Lord come again while I am alive.  I want to give my life for something that will last forever,  O, I delight, I delight to do Your will. |
| Chorus:  *What is on Your heart? Show me what to do. Let me know Your will and I will follow You.  What is on Your heart? Show me what to do. Let me know Your will and I will follow You.* | Mark Altrogge  ©1982 People of Destiny International/CopyCare  Ccli 169737  Streaming licence 595811 |

**Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession**

This week I am not going to lead any prayers but on the screen will be some images and pointers for prayer. Take this time to watch and listen to the music as we bring our prayers of thanksgiving and prayers for ourselves and others.

*[on the video version the prayers this week are images set to music. Unfortunately, I cannot replicate that on the scripted version.]*

Let us pray….

In 1 Chronicles 16:34 we read: **“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.”** *(NLT – New Living Translation of the Bible)* Loving God we thank you for the beauty of your creation. For the season of Spring when we can enjoy the growth in our gardens, parks and public places. We thank you for you for the climate in our country that means we can see a vast array of greens from flowers, plants, trees and grass.   
We ask that you help us to look after your creation. We ask that you help each one of us to care more for our environment.

We thank you for our church families. We thank you in these times of self-isolation and lockdown that we can still support each other albeit from a distance.   
We ask that you would strengthen not weaken our churches so that one day we can open the doors again and continue to be witnesses of Jesus.

We thank you for family and friends. We thank you for the support that they are to us.

We pray for those who are unwell in body, mind or spirit. We pray for your healing hand to touch them and us. We pray that we would know your presence with us each and every day.

We thank you for scientists and medics advising the Government during the Covid-19 Virus. We pray that you would help them to offer sound advice as we move forward and restrictions begin to ease.

We pray for wisdom and discernment for the specialists and governments around the world as they make difficult decisions in these challenging times.

And we pray for an end to Covid-19. That there will be no second spike of the virus….that a vaccine would be made that will work and protect people from this awful virus.

We offer all our prayers in and through the name of Jesus. Amen.

**Closing Song: We’ll walk the land (sung left to right)**

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| 1.. We'll walk the land  with hearts on fire; and every step will be a prayer. Hope is rising,  new day dawning; sound of singing fills the air. | 2.. Two thousand years, and still the flame  is burning bright across the land.  Hearts are waiting, longing, aching  for awakening once again. |
| Chorus  *Let the flame burn brighter*  *in the heart of darkness,*  *turning night to glorious day.*  *Let the song grow louder,*  *as our love grows stronger;*  *let it shine! let it shine!* | 3.. We'll walk for truth, speak out for love; in Jesus' name  we shall be strong, to lift the fallen,  to save the children, to fill the nation with Your song |
| Chorus  *Let the flame burn brighter*  *in the heart of darkness,*  *turning night to glorious day.*  *Let the song grow louder,*  *as our love grows stronger;*  *let it shine! let it shine!* | Graham Kendrick  © 1989 Make Way Music  Ccli 169737  Streaming licence 595811 |

Just before our final prayer…a reminder that there is a virtual Messy Church this afternoon. The video is on the Bamford Chapel and Norden URC website for you to watch and participate in.

Also if you have not yet signed up to offer prayer in the period of “Thy Kingdom Come” (from Ascension Day to Pentecost Sunday) then please look at the following link:   
<https://www.24-7prayer.com/signup/765237>

**Prayer for the week ahead**

We are reminded in Psalm 119 – **“Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path”** *(Psalm 119:115 NLT)* Living God, who shines His light so we can see. Be our guide and goal this week. In this period of “Thy Kingdom Come” may we do all we can, at every opportunity, to share the hope we have in Jesus so that we may bring glory to Him.

May we go now with God’s blessing, strength and guidance into the week that lies ahead.

Amen.