

Alton Baptist Church e-Service 7th March 2021

The love of God and our response

Good morning.

We are gathered together both by Zoom, or email, to remember the Lord Jesus and to worship and learn from God.

Let us sing our first hymn while we recognise how great our Lord Jesus is.

Song: MP506 How great Thou art

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GKhDCsLrUg>

We will now have a short time of prayer to worship the Lord.

We will now have another hymn

Song: MP94 Come let us sing of a wonderful love,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fJ2hiATs2s>

Intercessory Prayers:

We now have an opportunity to pray for all the things which are on our minds and remember others.

Readings:

I have a number of short readings for us.

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 1:10 – 13

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Matt 23:37 - 39

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' "

Song: MP828 Filled with compassion for all creation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VA16UVgh7g>

The last of these readings grabbed my attention earlier this week and made me think about the love of God and our response to it.

I am excited and humbled by the message that not only does God love me but is looking for a response from us. Jesus talks of those who refuse His love and explains how serious it is.

John tells us that "God so loved the world". That is not the rocks and seas and all the rest, though I am sure that they matter to Him; it is the people. He wants a family relationship with us. We read elsewhere that sin has separated us from God. We are not simply talking about mass-murder and that sort of thing. Little bits of selfishness and unkindness are a problem. God is building a family which will be perfect for ever. It is wonderful to read that God wants to erect no barriers for those who want to come to Him, and that is why Jesus came. So we read of God's love for us.

John at the beginning of his gospel tells us of Jesus through whom the world was created coming into his world. John tells us of those who rejected Him. He then tells us that those who receive him are given the right to become God's children. The language here and a reference elsewhere tells us that we receive an inheritance in heaven. When talking to Nicodemus later in the gospel Jesus talks of new birth and we can also read that God will be at work in us to change us to the people he wants us to be.

The third reading is very special. Jesus is looking over a city that has never truly accepted him. He looks back at their history and sees a people who always wanted their own way and anyone who criticised them was in trouble or even killed.

Jesus is longing to show them love and protection and the kind of care the hen takes of her offspring. It tells us in a simple way of how much

God loves us and reminds us of all those who show us love and care. In one of his letters John tells us that love comes from God. That is why it is so important to love each other.

Jesus goes on to prophesy the future of a Jerusalem that has rejected him. It is not pleasant reading but we must accept that our actions bring their own reward. Jesus came to pay the price of sin and to change us into better people.

In a few weeks' time we will be thinking of Calvary and the price he paid.

We have another hymn and then we will have communion.

Song: MP1072 In Christ alone

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ENtL_li4GbE

Before we take bread and wine we will read a short scripture to remind us of its meaning.

1 Cor 11:23 - 26

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Lord Jesus, as we take this bread we are reminded of your sufferings and death on the cross. We would be very humble as we contemplate this, but we thank you that there was a third day of resurrection and triumph. So Lord we give you thanks as we remember the love of God shown us in you.

Amen

After taking the bread we will remember the shed blood of Christ and remember what John wrote in his first epistle. "The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. Praise his name. Let us take our cups and remember him.

We will close with these words from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.