

ALTON BAPTIST CHURCH

e-Service

Sunday 25th April 2021

Welcome

We have gathered to spend time in the Lord's presence and worship Him.

Let us sing our first Hymn

Hymn MP77 Christ triumphant ever reigning

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5Xz9V-6JPA>

Let us pray:

Dear Lord we worship you not only because you are creator of the universe and so powerful and Majestic but because you have shown us your love We see this in your life on earth when you showed so much love and care for all kinds of people. We see it above all in those last days of your earthly life and when you suffered a cruel death at Calvary for us. We rejoice in your resurrection and the promise that one day we will share in it. Bless us this day we request and help us to rejoice in your goodness.

Amen

Our second hymn

Hymn MP109 Crown Him with many Crowns

https://youtu.be/YuMh_ept-Js

Intercessory and Praise Prayers

Time for us to share together in our prayers. We will each pray as we feel led.

Let us give thanks for all the Lord has done for us and all He means to us. Let us also remember others in their various needs.

Praise You for your guidance and loving arms around us and for preserving us.

For those suffering from Covid-19 and other illnesses that continue to afflict us.

For those who have recently lost loved ones, including our Queen, and saying goodbye in much-restricted circumstances.

For the continued success in vaccinating people and all will see the need for such. The benefits grossly outweigh the risks from Covid19.

For a return to normality, whatever that is.

Our leaders in whatever post they hold, including Ginny as Town and District Councillor.

For the persecuted church by way of the Barnabas Fund prayer.

Our third hymn

Hymn MP506 O Lord my God when I in awesome wonder....

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHqgQjJrxI8>

Last week Stuart talked for a while on a verse in Romans 12:19. I want us to go back briefly to the Old Testament where we first read it.

DEUTERONOMY 32:35 It is mine to avenge; I will repay.

As I look at the context of this verse it is set in a book which, among many other things, deals with the ways in which the Israelites are to administer Justice.

ROMANS 13:1 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ² Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. ⁴ For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

In the Epistle to the Romans we discover that we are to consider magistrates, judges and earthly rulers as a provision for us from God. As we look at these people we often find that they did not believe this themselves. The apostles encouraged the early Christians to think that way and so to respect those in authority. I believe this is true for us today. Sometimes when I look at the past I find that people who were undoubtedly unbelievers did things which helped Christians and the spread of the gospel.

If we take this passage seriously we see that we are encouraged to leave justice to our earthly authorities.

If all goes well, we can relax in their justice. Sometimes it does not go well. In this country, and many others the problem may lie in human fallibility. After all we are leaving these things to human beings and they sometimes fail and sometimes make mistakes. Sometimes it may be that evil people have taken over. This may give us a big emotional problem. I feel sorry for people who have these problems. We read about these things and have to recognise that they occur. A close friend of mine has a near relative whose child was cruelly murdered. The police never solved the case. This sort of thing causes us grief also. But, God says, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay."

If we can leave these things with God we can get on with our lives. We may even then be able to forgive people who have wronged us. When we reach that place we become better people and closer to the Lord Jesus.

One day Jesus was teaching people when he told the following story. As we read it we must bear in mind that his hearers had great respect for rich people. I am reminded of those in Margaret Thatcher's time who said, "Greed is good". I read the other day someone else saying the same thing. Greed is never good, ambition may be, but greed never. So let us look at what Jesus said:-

LUKE 16:19 "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. ²⁰ At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores ²¹ and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

²² "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴ So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

²⁵ "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

²⁷ "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, ²⁸ for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

²⁹ "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'

³⁰ " 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'

³¹ "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.' "

As we read this we see god's valuation of people is quite different from that of the world. The Lord knows Lazarus by name but we have no name for the rich man. Lazarus ends in a place of honour, at Abraham's side. The rich man ends in Hell. The story is a warning for how we spend our lives. There were rich people who followed Jesus, but not many of them. There were poor people who opposed Jesus but the Lord wanted us to know that our eternal future did not depend on being successful in worldly things but in a relationship with Him.

There are two further lessons Jesus taught.

First, there is no way back from Hell into Heaven after we have died. This is a solemn thing and should affect our whole way of thinking.

The second is what was said about the dead man's brothers. If they did not listen to the prophets they would not listen to one coming back from the dead. Jesus was looking forward to His own resurrection. Those who had killed Him would try their very best to suppress this news.

People are still the same. Some will follow Jesus some will reject Him.

I trust we have all made the decision to follow Jesus.

Let us sing our final hymn

Hymn 1072 In Christ alone

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=16KYvfIc2bE&feature=youtu.be>

Let us close with prayer.

Lord Jesus we commit this day into Your hands and seek your blessing.
We seek your blessing on all those who have shared the service with us.
We seek your blessing for friends and family members. Lord we seek to
leave here with your peace resting upon us.
Amen.