

Traditional Home service Sunday 6th June

OPENING PRAYER

O God,
the strength of all those who put their
trust in you,
mercifully accept our prayers
and, because through the weakness of
our mortal nature
we can do no good thing without you,
grant us the help of your grace,
that in the keeping of your
commandments
we may please you both in will and deed;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Let us return to the Lord our God and
say to him:

**Father, we have sinned against heaven
and against you. We are not worthy to
be called your children. We turn to you
again. Have mercy on us, bring us
back to yourself as those who once
were dead but now have life through
Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the
name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to
God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms,
hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts.
Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (*The King of love my Shepherd is*)

READINGS - 1 Samuel 8.4-20
2 Corinthians 4.13 - 5.1
Mark 3.20-35

TALK

CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth. I believe in
Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who
was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of
the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius
Pilate, was crucified, died, and was
buried; he descended to the dead. On
the third day he rose again; he ascended
into heaven, he is seated at the right
hand of the Father, and he will come to
judge the living and the dead. I believe in
the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness
of sins, the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

*Spend some time praying for our nation,
our community and our families.*

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your
name, your kingdom come, your will be
done, on earth as in heaven. Give us
today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver
us from evil. For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours, now and for
ever. Amen.

HYMN 2 (*Great is Thy faithfulness*)

CONCLUSION

The Lord bless you and watch over you,
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you, the Lord look
kindly on you and give you peace;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you
always.
Amen.

HYMNS TO USE

The King of love my Shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his
And he is mine for ever.

Where streams of living water flow
My ransomed soul he leadeth,
And where the verdant pastures grow
With food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
But yet in love he sought me,
And on his shoulder gently laid,
And home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill
With thee, dear Lord, beside me;
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
Thy cross before to guide me.

Thou spread'st a table in my sight;
Thy unction, grace bestoweth:
And O what transport of delight
From thy pure chalice floweth!

And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
Within thy house for ever.

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my
Father
There is no shadow of turning with Thee
Thou changest not, Thy compassions,
they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be

*Great is Thy faithfulness, great is Thy
faithfulness
Morning by morning new mercies I see
All I have needed Thy hand hath
provided
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me*

Summer and winter, and springtime and
harvest
Sun, moon and stars in their courses
above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to
guide
Strength for today and bright hope for
tomorrow
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand
beside

They say that a picture is worth 1000 words and I'm hoping that this is true because I want to share a lot of information that the Lord has been showing me in a very short period of time.

A couple of years ago I produced a picture called "Heart of the cross" which whilst not being a brilliant piece of art does demonstrate my argument that nothing is created unless it is imagined first. In my case it was a picture of a heart in the centre of a cross and I saw it in my mind even before I got hold of the canvas.

The chair that you are sitting on the screen that you're looking at, the car that you drive or the bike that you ride were all at one time imagined in the mind of their creator.

There is a lot said in the Bible about imagination. Psalm 103 verse 4 says that God knows our frame and remembers that we are made from dust. The Hebrew word interpreted as frame can also be translated as imagination and is in fact translated as imagination five times in the Old Testament.

Our imaginations are the frame of our existence and affect the way we see life and yet as we get older there is a tendency for people to think that imagination is just for children and artists and there is a tendency to undervalue its influence in our lives.

Everyone has a God-given imagination.

In both Luke and Mark's gospel Jesus says: **"truly I tell you anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it"** – or as one contemporary translation puts it **"I promise you that you cannot get into God's kingdom unless you accept it the way a child does."**

The kingdom of God is where God rules and Jesus commanded us to seek it first above anything else. Jesus also told us that the kingdom of God does not come with observation but that the kingdom of God is within us – in our hearts or if you prefer our spirits. To paraphrase these three sayings of Jesus our first priority in life is to seek the reign and rule of God which is within us, but we can only do that if we accept it the way that the child does.

Children have no problem imagining and most of the time neither do we.

Whenever you read a book, you exercise your imagination. I remember the time that I read the Lord of the Rings trilogy as a teenager. I was transported to Middle Earth and took every step of the journey to Mount Doom with Frodo and Sam. I also rode with the Riders of Rohan and fought the Orcs alongside Aragorn.

A strange kind of sadness came over me when I realise that I was over halfway through the third book. I couldn't stop reading but at the same time I didn't want the adventure to end. The characters in the book had become my friends and my companions and when I finally closed the book I mourned their loss.

Many years later Peter Jackson did an excellent job of turning the book into three films and whilst I thoroughly enjoyed the films they could not compare to the movies that were played out in my imagination when I was a teenager.

The imagination is part of what the Bible calls "the heart". This is not the fleshly pump that sends the blood around our bodies, but the New Testament makes it clear that this is our innermost man or our spirit.

The heart includes the entire mental and moral activity of human beings and is the seat of our spiritual life. It's where we find grief, joy, desires, affections, conscience, imagination and faith.

Our imaginations are where Satan attacks us.

Writers of fiction like Tolkien can create a world in their imagination that can communicate to our imaginations. Writers of pornography can have the same effect. The Imagination is immensely powerful and can be used for both good and bad.

Jesus taught that: **"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."**

We are all aware that our imagination can be used for both good and evil, to be creative or destructive. **Jesus said: "out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness,**

wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man."

Paul encourages us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds and this includes our imaginations.

He wrote in Ephesians 3 "I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." He went on to say that Jesus "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us."

As I said earlier imagination and faith go together and Hebrews 11 defines faith as "the essence of things being hoped for, the evidence of things not having been seen".

Faith is when you believe that what you hope for is coming about when you cannot see it, feel it, touch it or smell it. The same chapter goes on to say that "without faith it is impossible to please God".

We are instructed by Scripture to live by faith and not by sight – and not by any of our other physical senses either.

This makes sense when you remember that God is Spirit and He made us in His image. We are spirit beings who have a soul that includes our minds and emotions, and we live in a body that exists completely in the physical realm. God doesn't look at our natural senses but only at our spiritual development.

Today's passage from 2 Corinthians tells us that we have the same spirit of faith as the Psalmist who wrote Psalm 116. Faith is a spiritual attribute and is eternal and when you talk about anything being eternal you must exclude the realm of the five senses.

Because Paul lived by faith and not by his senses he was able to say in verses 16 and 17: "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."

He is saying that whilst his physical body was wasting away his spirit was being renewed day by day and that that was what is important.

It is no wonder that his physical body was wasting away when you consider the number times that he was beaten with rods and whips, was stoned to death and then brought back to life, shipwrecked, bitten by a poisonous snake and locked into solitary confinement for long periods at a time. These were the "light and momentary troubles" which he said was achieving for him eternal glory.

He then goes on to make an amazing statement. "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

So how do you fix your eyes on something that is unseen? You need to use your God-given imagination and faith.

Paul was able to see with spiritual eyes and hear with spiritual ears what the Lord showed him and said to him. And he was much more interested in those things that were spiritual and eternal than those things which were passing away even as he looked at them with his physical eyes.

The book of Acts records the first Christian martyr being stoned as follows:

"But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

"Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

This same gift of spiritual sight enabled the writer to the Hebrews say: "But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honour because He suffered death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone."

As we study God's Word we need to open our imaginations to the Truth and fix the eyes of our heart on what is unseen and eternal.

We used to sing a simple chorus that gave us all access to a deep truth:

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace." Amen