**Morning Praise @ Home 14th April 2024**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Reading Ephesians 6: 1 – 9 Matthew 5: 13 – 16

### Reflection from John A LIVING FAITH IN DAILY LIFE

How far does your relationship with God extend into your life and beyond?

* How does it impact your choices?
* Your lifestyle?
* Your spending?
* Your generosity?
* Your relationships?
* Your working life?
* Your decision-making?

You see the point is that, as we grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ, so it is that his Spirit shapes our lives more and more.

When you look at each of the letters in the New Testament they all divide roughly into two sections: the first part usually explains what it is that we believe as Christians and the second section gives guidance about how to live as followers of Christ.

And in Ephesians, from Ch 5:22 through to Ch 6:9, Paul speaks specifically about the way our relationship with God should shape our close personal relationships (such as those in marriage, and between parents and children) and our working relationships.

Straightway we might be faced with a big challenge, because our chosen lifestyle may not be consistent with what God asks of us. As we encounter what the Bible says, we realise that change and transformation are called for.

You see, what’s clear from this passage of Scripture is that, *in Christ*, we all have *obligations* as well as

rights.

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Looking first at **family life**, Paul says that children are to obey their parents, whilst parents are to behave appropriately towards their children. Children are to honour what their mum and dad require of them, and at the same time parents are not to provoke their children to anger or break them with harsh treatment.

Why is this important? Because both adults and children share the same heavenly Father. Although they have different roles and expectations, they are *equally regarded* by God. This elevates the status of children significantly higher than they were regarded in Old Testament times.

So, for example, while it helps that children behave appropriately at home and in church, it also matters that they are not hidden away because some people ‘don’t like children in church’. As Christians, this needs working through by all of us, since it’s part of what belonging to an inter-generational church family is all about.

Those of us who are one, know that *being* a parent is a big challenge. We are fallible and make mistakes. We may ourselves have been parented ourselves brilliantly … or not. We might have children who do not share our Christian faith or we may be the offspring of parents who do not follow Jesus.

All of this is important and my question today is: as a direct consequence of being a follower of Jesus, *how* much help have you had - or do you need - to be a better parent or to be a better child to *your* parents? [Mention Parenting for Faith: [www.parentingforfaith.brf.org.uk](http://www.parentingforfaith.brf.org.uk)]

For some of us, being in a family has been a difficult experience. Our upbringing may have been oppressive and damaging. *We* may need help to deal with this background … However, we shouldn’t make the mistake of thinking that, because some families get it badly wrong, we should dismiss the notion of family life altogether. It is God’s design and He wants to help us get it right.

One of the huge challenges to close relationships is that we inhabit a culture which is now far removed from biblical Christian values. So for example, our society’s concept of marriage is no longer in line with a traditional Christian view of marriage. Some have rejected marriage and family altogether. Even as believers, we may be strongly influenced by cultural values and opinions that don’t stack up with a biblically inspired faith.

Rather than shunt the issues to one side, we need to address them, engaging with whoever or whatever can help us think them through. We need to begin to sift what are simply *our* opinions from what we discover of God’s wishes in Scripture.

Examining and questioning how we conduct our domestic relationships is a normal part of growing to maturity as Christians (which takes a lifetime!). We can make a start with these verses from Paul.

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The other main point in our passage from Ephesians 6 is that there is a direct link between being a Christian and being an **employee**.

Paul refers to ‘slaves’ and ‘masters’, and we need to understand the context: in the culture in which Paul operated, the labour of slaves was as intrinsic to society as electricity is to ours. But we have moved on to regard the oppressive ‘ownership’ of another as wrong – indeed it was Christians who led – and still lead – the fight to abolish human slavery.

Although Paul would not have understood that slavery of itself was wrong, he did know that the way a Christian master treated a slave was vitally important. As an equally regarded child of God, a slave was to be treated with respect and embraced by the family. Other passages (like the letter to Philemon and the letter to the Colossians) emphasise that a Christian slave and a Christian master have obligations to be honourable to one another.

These Christian workplace principles were eventually understood by society, with trade unions becoming a vehicle for just employment in many nations of the world. Fair treatment, fair employment laws, and fair trade all owe their origins to this development in Christian thinking.

Can you see the point I identified at the start? That, as with personal relationships, the world of work has to be *thought through* with a Christian mindset. For all of us, our background, our culture and our experience may need to be thought out afresh in the light of Christian principles.

Philip Hillman, our trainee Reader, is both a businessman and a Christian, and I think it is vital that folk like Philip train to develop a theology of daily life, work and family life which is rooted in good teaching and biblical understanding. Going forward, this is vital to Philip’s calling, as it is to each one of us. Do pray for him.

Thinking Christianly about all of life is not something churches always address well. Let’s see what *we* can do to remedy that in our life together. **Amen**

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession**

We pray for your Church today, gathering all around the world in tiny churches and great cathedrals, to praise you and to hear your holy word.

We pray for the world which struggles to live justly and in peace: for world leaders, for wisdom, sound judgement and action to ensure the health and well-being of their people; the millions of people around the world who have little or no access to healthcare; for those countries reliant on aid and charities to bring healing to their people, and for those who work tirelessly in difficult and challenging conditions. We pray that we use our wealth and time wisely for the benefit of all mankind.

We pray for those who have to search for daily food or walk long distances for clean water.  We remember with sadness those whose lives are cut short by disease or violence, and those who have fled their home in fear. We pray for those who meet persecution and torture with courage and dignity.

God of peace, we remember before you continents, countries and places where there is violence and killing, massacre, mayhem, and gang warfare: for the people of Israel, Gaza, Ukraine, Somalia and Haiti, for a lasting peace to allow healing of bodies, minds and spirits, and rebuilding of lives.

God of love, we thank you for those people who sustain us by their love and forgiveness. Thank you for the network of people who support us and make up the fabric of our family and community life. We pray that we are honest and true in our relationships with our family and friends.

We pray for those for whom this day will seem long and hard: for those in hospital or ill at home, those struggling with despair or depression, those waiting for a job, or important news, or a friend to call. We name in our hearts all those known to us who are in special need at this time. Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit; give them hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**