

Call to Worship the triune God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

The Gospel testified faithfully by the chosen Apostles which we have received. Which God promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, regarding His Son, who was a descendant of David according to the flesh, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through Him and on behalf of His name, apostleship was given to call all those among the nations to the obedience that comes from faith. And we also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Invocation prayer:

Our Father in heaven, holy is your Name. You have revealed to your faithful ones the secrets of the Kingdom of heaven. This day help us to grasp and live in the wonderful truth of living daily and nightly in your love as obedient children, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Hymn: *by Josiah Conder, 1789–1855*

1. The Lord is King! lift up thy voice, O earth, and all ye heavens rejoice;
From world to world the joy shall ring: The Lord omnipotent is King!
2. The Lord is King! who then shall dare resist His will, distrust His care,
Or murmur at His wise decrees, or doubt His royal promises?
3. The Lord is King! child of the dust, the Judge of all the earth is just;
Holy and true are all His ways: let every creature speak His praise.
4. He reigns! ye saints, exalt your strains; Your God is King, your Father reigns:
And He is at the Father's side, the Man of love, the Crucified.
5. Come, make your wants, your burdens known; He will present them at the throne;
And angel bands are waiting there His messages of love to bear.
6. One Lord, one empire, all secures; He reigns, and life and death are yours,
Through earth and heaven one song shall ring, the Lord omnipotent is King!

Scriptures:

- Psalm 30 (eat verse 5. Don't let Satan give you the wrong balance)
- Luke 7.36-50 (dwell on the truth that forgiveness fruits in love when it is believed)
- 1 John 4.7-12

Hymn: *by Samuel Davies 1723-61*

1. Great God of wonders! All Thy ways display the attributes divine;
But countless acts of pardoning grace beyond Thine other wonders shine,
Beyond Thine other wonders shine:

*Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?
Or who has grace so rich and free?*

2. Such dire offences to forgive, such guilty, daring souls to spare;
This is Thy grand prerogative, and none shall in the honour share,
And none shall in the honour share:
3. In wonder lost, with trembling joy we take the pardon of our God;
Pardon for crimes of deepest dye, a pardon bought with Jesu's blood,
A pardon bought with Jesu's blood:
4. Pardon—from an offended God! Pardon—for sins of deepest dye!
Pardon—bestowed through Jesu's blood! Pardon—that brings the rebel nigh!
Pardon—that brings the rebel nigh!
5. O may this strange, this matchless grace, this God-like miracle of love,
Fill the wide earth with grateful praise, as now it fills the choirs above!
As now it fills the choirs above!

Message:

Mental health series: Text for today; Keep yourselves in the love of God as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

One of the exhortations to any and every Christian is simply 'keep yourself in the love of God'. Easier said than done says the badly depressive mind. Nevertheless, it is there in Scripture, and it is there because of the continual lies of the Evil One to persuade you otherwise. The church is the object of Satan's lies.

To know the love of God at times has little to do with actually knowing and feeling that love. Sometimes it is simply acknowledging the Biblical promise that it is true. These are moments not an unending lifetime. The Psalmist acknowledged that with;

Sing to the Lord, O you His saints, and praise His holy name.
For His anger is fleeting, but His love (favour) lasts a lifetime.
Weeping may stay the night, but joy comes in the morning.

Every letter written by the foundational Apostle -preachers identifies love as the primary vital sign of a church and therefore each individual believer.

Read through the letters and see that for yourself. Love, Faith and Hope. These are the souls heart beats of the living body of Christ.

His love comforts you when all else seem to disregard or hate you. His love builds up the believer to be strong and honour the Name of Jesus in a hostile social environment.

The bravest warrior in the fiercest battle is the one who fights for the love that is behind him which empowers to fight more than the evil that is before him.

Love, lived and growing is spiritual maturity. It yields ability to do good in attitude and action to those who don't give to you. It proves that you are joined to heavenly supply.

Love, God's love pondered, working in you, soaks up and dries off the arid woes of rejection and inner nothingness. It conquers all.

This love empowered martyrs in their flesh. Men and women throughout history some even girls and boys by it were given supernatural power to endure unspeakable tortures in confessing Jesus. Others still bear indignities in the ordinary frictions of life and do deeds of Godly love amongst those who only insult them. In workplace and even home.

Some rise up and refuse to settle for less than they can achieve to the glory of God not their own comfort or glory.

God's love at work in us is powerful. And we need it so much for our own failings.

Keep yourself in God's love. David the anointed King of Israel did that. O how he wished he could undo that day when he called Bathsheba up to the place and next day ordered Uriah away from the palace and back to the front line. But he couldn't. He was locked into the consequences of his action and Divine punishment.

What did this broken man do? David stayed in the eternally established Covenant of God's love. He kept himself in God's love.

Caged in the chains of guilt he stayed in the love of God until God chose to let him feel that love again with deep gratitude. It was here that David wrote some of his most heartfelt Psalms, perhaps number thirty-two.

Peter was the same. Jesus called him a Satan for arrogantly assuming he could stop Jesus going to Jerusalem and torture to fulfil his great redemptive enterprise. Then the denial. But Peter in deep depressive remorse had nowhere to go, He stayed within arm's reach of the love of the One he knew would hold him.

If you are in the pit right now, stay where you are. Stay in the truth of God's love until you sense again the reality of that love.

Job had to do that. He had no human support at all. He waited and eventually deep insight came; not a 'why' for his suffering but the truth about God and his relationship.

The heavenly Father led me through a season that built my faith when I was a young pastor. I thought I was well prepared for the work: I was often asked to speak, at youth events and I felt I was responding adequately to the questions and needs of my people.

But the Father wanted to show me something more. Without that lesson, I would not have been fruitful in the work I would enter two years later, in a large urban context amongst lost and despairing people very different from the small rural town where I was then. Looking back, I had to learn and know the unshakeable foundations of Hope with confidence. The power of Divine hope against the enemies of depression and fear.

It was strange. I felt I had let God down in a situation I was trying to address. I had also been delving into and wrestling with a Biblical understanding and practise of perfectionism.

Then it happened, this dark pall came over me, and my mind gave in to an awful feeling of nothingness and lostness with no connection to God or his love. It was like a Psalm Seventy-seven experience. I didn't know where God was. To make it worse I began hearing voices telling me to do strange things like confessing inner thoughts to the congregation on

Sunday which would have been so unhelpful, weird and shameful. If not untrue. And if I didn't, I would die. It was so definite, so authoritarian.

It was an awful, depressive month.

Then one night sitting at dinner table with my young family an awful assault of lies hit me (but I couldn't tell that they were lies) with savagery. If I didn't do such and such publicly, I would die.

Was that God, the Devil or what?

I was terrified but no-one knew. I was just numb.

Then a miracle happened. I said quietly to God. "I will not do what those voices are saying. If it is you, I cannot obey. In confusion I throw myself on your mercy, I stand under your mercy".

Looking back, I realised I was throwing myself on God's merciful love.

Then something happened. Within minutes I felt a relief come upon me.

That was over forty years ago. I have never had those voices since.

Let God keep you in his love. Keep yourself in his love as you wait for the mercy of God to eventually come. Around you like a comforting arm.

You will discover good things, better things in the times ahead.

We sometimes speak blithely "God is love". But that love is the Creator of the limitless cosmos incarnating himself on this speck of dust and allowing the hate and evil which had infected his most precious joy and possession, his family of children to be fatally infected forever and lose their eternal estate.

He comes onto this earth and as their creator, (your creator) relives their collected lives in total moral obedience, he draws their rebellious hateful response into himself at Crucifixion and drains all sins venom (your sins indeed) into his sinless body forever. This our Jesus is raised by God's rewarding power. He is your and my hero of love and power forever!

Prayer:

Dear heavenly Father forgive me for the lie of diminishing your love to me. Lift me up into the secure place of being in your church. I will wait for you to refresh me with your eternal life as you have promised in the Scripture, that Epistle of Jude. Like the woman who anointed Jesus' feet, cause me to grow in such awareness of your forgiving love to me that I will love with truth and strength as I live to love all my days on this earth.

In Jesus my Saviour's Name.

Hymn: *by Horatius Bonar, 1808–89*

1. Belovèd, let us love: Love is of God;
In God alone hath love its true abode.
2. Belovèd, let us love: for they who love,

They only are His sons, born from above.

3. Belovèd, let us love: for love is rest,
And he who loveth not, abides unblest.
4. Belovèd, let us love: in love is light,
And he who loveth not, dwelleth in night.
5. Belovèd, let us love: for only thus
Shall we behold that God who loveth us.

Benediction:

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who by grace has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good word and deed.

This service was prepared by Rev Ian Clarkson for HopeNet SA