



## EMMANUEL CHURCH – MORNING WORSHIP 24<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2020



Make some space at home to read and pray through the following, if possible, on the morning of Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> May.  
If you are able, watch this small service via the Emmanuel Church website: [www.emmanueleastbourne.org.uk](http://www.emmanueleastbourne.org.uk).

**Gathering Words:** Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted.  
(Isaiah 12:4-6)  
Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world.  
Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you!

**Prayer:** We praise you for your creative power this day. For...  
We praise you for your forgiving power this day. For...  
We praise you for your inspiring power this day. For...

**Reading:** Mark 12:28-37 'The First Commandment'

<sup>28</sup> One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, 'Which commandment is the first of all?' <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, 'The first is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; <sup>30</sup> you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."<sup>31</sup> The second is this, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.' <sup>32</sup> Then the scribe said to him, 'You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that "he is one, and besides him there is no other"; <sup>33</sup> and "to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength", and "to love one's neighbour as oneself". This is much more important than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.' <sup>34</sup> When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' After that no one dared to ask him any question.

**Address:** 'A Faith from the Heart'

**Prayers and The Lord's Prayer:**

Let us pray. Loving God: **PLACE YOUR LOVE WITHIN OUR HEARTS.**

We pray for those whose heart is full of joy – for those who give thanks for health, happiness, new arrivals, and new opportunities.

Loving God: **PLACE YOUR LOVE WITHIN OUR HEARTS, THAT WE MAY SHARE JOY.**

We pray for those whose heart is full of sadness and longing – for those who mourn a loved relative or friend; for those who miss physical touch and company; for those who feel regret.

Loving God: **PLACE YOUR LOVE WITHIN OUR HEARTS, THAT WE MAY WEEP WITH THOSE WHO WEEP, AND REACH OUT WITH COMPASSION TO THOSE FEELING ALONE.**

We pray for those whose heart is full of hope and possibility. We pray especially for those who work for peace and justice; those who work for the health of the sick; those who care for our most vulnerable people; those searching for cures and vaccines.

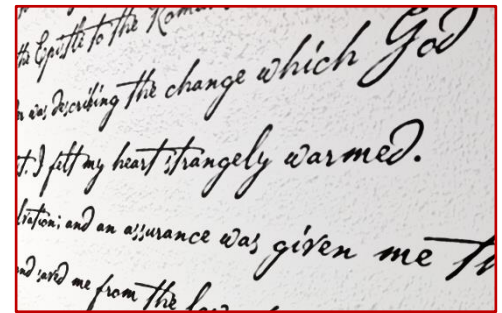
Loving God: **PLACE YOUR LOVE WITHIN OUR HEARTS, THAT WE MAY GIVE THANKS FOR THE GIFTS OF OTHERS, AND SHARE OUR GIFTS WITH THE PEOPLE OF THIS WORLD.**

**WE ASK THIS IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, LORD OF ALL, WHO PRAYED: OUR FATHER...**

**Blessing:** The gospel keeps bringing blessings and is spreading throughout the world, (Colossians 1:3) just as it has among you, ever since the day you first heard about the grace of God and came to know it as it really is. And may the blessing...

## Address: 'A Faith from the Heart'

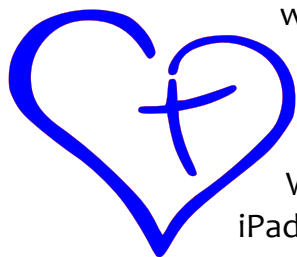
This Sunday is 'Aldersgate Sunday' – the Sunday on which Methodists remember John Wesley's experience on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1738. Famously his journal entry that evening read: "About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation...". Contrary to popular opinion, Methodist local preachers and ministers are not required to know this whole entry word for word. Also, contrary to popular local opinion, I may have been raised by a Methodist historian, but I was not required to recite excerpts from John Wesley's journal at 4:30am either.



Detail from John Wesley's journal  
Wesley's Chapel in London

So what was John's experience that warm early summer evening? Would we call it 'conversion'? Not really, he was already a Christian, a member of the 'Holy Club' at Oxford, known for their Bible reading, fasting, preaching and acts of charity. Was it a 'calling'? Well, he was already a clergyman, ordained as a young man in 1725. Whatever it was, it was a deep, inner experience for Wesley and he simply felt his 'heart strangely warmed' in a way that it had never been before, and which would guide his life for the rest of his days.

In these days of lockdown with restrictions hanging heavy on us all, many people are missing the physical gathering, especially on Sunday mornings like these. Worshipping together, praying and singing together, fellowship together. As much as we have every right to miss this with great longing, perhaps today on Aldersgate Sunday we should be reminded that it is the human heart which is so often place of God's activity. It is the human heart where God is at



work, where God's whisper is to be heard, breathing words of peace to those in need of rest, or solace to those troubled. The human heart is also the place where God may spark in us feelings of anger at the injustices or cruelty in the world and even around us, or pangs of compassion for the suffering of others. We may now be worshipping in church, in our garden, through the TV, radio, or iPad...but time and again it is the human heart where God is to be found.

Mark's Gospel includes this great story of Jesus being questioned about commandments and Jesus refers to Deuteronomy 6:5 in his answer: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength". Such profound wisdom and truth are in this ancient text – words of devotion, obedience and feeling. The scriptures providing Jesus with an answer to questioning teachers – and it's a wisdom and truth for us today. If the human heart is the place where God's love is to be found, then it somehow seems right for the human heart to be the place from which our love for God and our neighbour emanates and flows. Of course, I don't mean 'heart' in any physical sense at all – but in the sense of 'heart' meaning our deepest being, our inner self, our soul if you like.

We are unable to gather as we would like – with one another and with the community around us – but God will continue to be at work in the way that God is always at work. God is present with us and within us in all our moments joyful or hard, and the more we open ourselves to his loving presence, the more we will find ourselves longing to serve him, by loving those we live our lives alongside. Paul wrote to the Romans: "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Romans 5:5). A good reminder that Pentecost is coming soon! May our hearts be always ready to receive, and give, God's love. Amen.