



EMMANUEL CHURCH – WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 7TH FEBRUARY 2021



Make some space at home to read and pray through the following, if possible, on the morning of Sunday 7th February 2021.
If you are able, join in this service on Zoom – contact Rev. Paul for details of the service, login and password.

Opening Prayers:

Almighty God, by whose grace alone we are accepted and called to your service: strengthen us by your Holy Spirit and make us worthy of our calling; 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.



Reading: Isaiah 58: 5-11 'A Fast Acceptable to God'

⁵ Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? ⁶ Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? ⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

⁸ Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear-guard. ⁹ Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, ¹⁰ if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. ¹¹ The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

Reading: Matthew 6: 1-6, 16 'Giving Alms and Fasting'

¹ 'Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. ² 'So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁶ 'And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.

Address: 'God has a reward for us, for giving, praying and fasting!' (overleaf)

Prayers of Intercession and The Lord's Prayer:

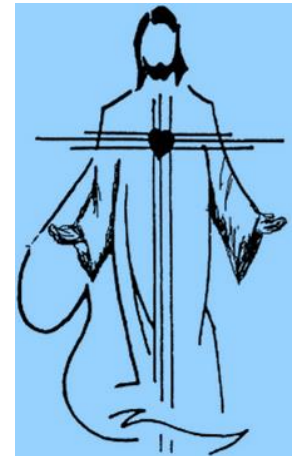
Spend some time in quiet prayer and reflection, remembering those who need courage and strength for today. You may pray especially for family and friends; for neighbours and people living close by; for keyworkers of all descriptions and those who lead and guide us. Pray also for yourself, that God blesses you with courage and strength to face the times in which we live.

Blessing: May the blessing of God: Father, Son and Spirit be with us today and always. Amen.

Address: ‘God has a reward for us, for giving, praying and fasting!’

Good morning dear church family and May God bless you abundantly. On 17th February it will be “Ash Wednesday”, we are going into the Lent Season, the 40 days (not counting Sundays), when believers concentrate on repentance, prayer, fasting, giving alms, reading the Bible and meditate on it. Today, we will learn together about Fasting. Before we move ahead, I want to make it very clear that I am not suggesting you to fast, it is my request to you that if you want to have fast, please check with your doctor first, because we all have different health conditions. According to Matthew 6:1-6, 16, if we give to the needy, pray and fast, we will get reward from Lord our God, but only if we fast without being hypocrites. Jesus said it in his “Sermon on the Mount”. We are not hearing much about fasting during the year but in Lent, I would like to preach on fast. This is my first Lent Season in Eastbourne and I will try to preach only on fast during Lent.

The Concise Dictionary of the Christian Church says, “Fasting is a penitential discipline, designed to strengthen the spiritual life by weakening the attractions of sensible pleasures.” Jesus also taught us through his teachings and he practiced it. He expected us to give, pray and fast. He said “if you fast”, not “when” you fast. Jesus approved of fasting and encouraged his disciples to have fast to get more spiritual power and strength. In Matthew 17:21 tells that once Jesus’ disciples failed to cast out the demon from the boy who was suffering. Jesus rebuked the demon and it came out of him and the boy was healed instantly. Jesus’ disciples came to Jesus privately and asked him why we could not cast it out? Jesus replied, “This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”



Do you remember in Matthew 9, the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and said to him, Jesus we and the Pharisees fast but your disciples don’t fast at all? Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn, while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast. Jesus was ascended to heaven and now is the time for us to fast as his followers until he will come again.

Being a Jew, he was supposed to fast on the Day of Atonement – the only fast commanded by God in the Old Testament (see Leviticus 16 and 23). The Bible never commands us to fast, it is completely voluntary. Many people in the Bible fasted, such as Moses, Samson, Hannah, Saul, Jonathan, David, Elijah, King Jehoshaphat, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Joel, the King and whole city of Nineveh, Daniel, John the Baptist, Prophetess Anna, the prophets and teachers at Antioch, Paul, Peter, our role model Jesus also fasted for 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness and prepared himself for his earthly ministry. Martin Luther, John Calvin and John Wesley, also fasted. Many people are fasting throughout the year.

I also want to share my own experience relating to fasting. I like to fast during particular times, time of great trials and tribulations, time to minister to the need of others, to express the gratitude to the Lord, to seek God’s wisdom and guidance. We should not think that by fasting we can bribe God or twist his arm. Through fasting God helps us to understand our situation well and he gives us more wisdom to handle it. In the Bible there are a few examples of partial fast, complete fast and national fast. Bible does not instruct us how long a fast should last. There is a fast of one day, 3 days, 7 days, 21 days and 40 days in the Scripture.

According to the Scripture, to have a fast is a symbol of being humble, David expressed in Psalm 35:13, “I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting. Isaiah told us in chapter 58:5-11, the true fast God has chosen for Israelites and for us. Please read it and may God give us wisdom to give, pray and fast and get reward from the Lord our God. Amen.