



EMMANUEL CHURCH – WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 14TH FEBRUARY 2021



Make some space at home to read and pray through the following, if possible, on the morning of Sunday 14th February 2021.
If you are able, join in this service on Zoom – contact Rev. Paul for details of the service, login and password.

Opening Prayer: by Clare McBeath

God stands with arms wide open, ready to welcome us home with an enormous hug.
God sits with hands held out, ready to listen to our troubles and sooth our worries.
God whoops with hands punching the sky, ready to delight and celebrate all that we can be.
So come, worship the God who first loved us.

Reading: Jeremiah 31: 1-4 ‘The Everlasting Love of God’

¹ At that time, says the Lord, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. ² Thus says the Lord: The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness; when Israel sought for rest, ³ the Lord appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, I have continued my faithfulness to you. ⁴ Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt, O Israel!



Reading: 1 John 4: 7-12, 16 ‘God is Love’

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. ¹⁶ God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

Address: ‘Hearts of Everlasting Love’

Prayers of Intercession and the Lord’s Prayer: by Andrew Pratt

Love is the circle that holds and unfolds, as journeying onwards the future unfolds.
May God be our guard, our companion and friend, may grace keep us faithful,
may hope have no end.

God, give us patience to listen and learn, to value the gifts that we never could earn.
When living is challenged and tensions are rife, may love help us cope with the stresses of life.

God, deepen friendship and help us to find, as one with each other, new ways to be kind;
then bind us together, bring new love to birth, as long as we live as companions on earth.

On from this moment we go in God’s grace; we walk hand in hand filled with joy from this place;
we know in God’s Spirit our lives are now bound; in love we find heaven – let heaven resound!

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. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

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

Address: 'Hearts of Everlasting Love'



Love Hearts – you know those little round sugary sweets – have been around for ages: since 1954 in fact. Did you know that the messages on the Love Hearts themselves have changed over the years? So initially they had things like: 'All Yours', 'Be Mine', and of course 'I Love You'. But times change and Love Hearts have had to change too. So since the 1990s it's been possible to get Love Hearts with 'Email Me' and 'Text Me' on them. 'Text Me'?! (How quaint – cheaper to use WhatsApp or Messenger if you ask me, but you'd need a bigger sweet to print it on!). In 2011 WAYNE AND COLLEEN appeared after Wayne Rooney's wedding, and in 2012 for the Diamond Jubilee 'CONGRATS MA'AM' arrived too. So, some of the messages have changed, and of course, Swizzles haven't missed a trick to adapt the formula for special occasions. I don't know how I feel about this – the messages might change but surely it's the same love we're talking about here, yes?

In Jeremiah, the prophet is giving an oracle – whenever he writes “thus says the Lord” it's as if Jeremiah is speaking for God. And here we have a message for the people who are in exile after the fall of Jerusalem in 587BC. The Hebrew people are in Babylon and desperate to return home. Jeremiah's words remind them that God has loved them with an everlasting love, an unchanging love. This is the same love of God that has been with them since the dawn of all time, and no exile, no disaster, no displacement – no lockdown, we could say – is going to change anything of the love of God: it just IS! It's a message from a prophet a long time ago which actually matters today because it says something of the nature of God. Times change, words change, language changes, relationships change... but God is ever-present, ever-faithful, and ever-loving.

Thinking of love and hearts and Valentine's etc it's interesting that God's relationship with God's people in the Bible is often described in terms of two parties, using human metaphors and images to describe what is otherwise very difficult to define.

Sometimes God is the parent, Israel is the child: “For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.” (Psalm 139:13). Maybe a beautiful, nurturing love.

Sometimes God is the husband, Israel is the wife: “For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name” (Isaiah 54:5). Maybe here a shared, mutual partnership of love.

Sometimes God and Israel are two lovers falling in and out of love: “My beloved turned and was gone. I sought him, but did not find him; I called him, but he gave no answer. O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, tell him this: I am faint with love” (Song of Solomon 5:6-7). You'll get a bit more on this in tomorrow's Daily Devotion from Matthew too.

None of these are fully adequate in themselves. People who have had very difficult relationships within their families, or specifically with a parent, a husband, a wife, a partner, might find it hard to follow the imagery. And we mustn't forget that the Church over centuries has caused great harm and hurt in making statements about relationships many of which bear little resemblance to Biblical teaching. For many, it's the love at the heart of things which is what matters.

So maybe Jeremiah actually hits the nail on the head for us. The oracle in which God says: 'You are mine and I am yours' is simply that bond between Creator and Creature, in the context of an everlasting love that is only possible from God. This is the same love that in Jesus Christ was expressed, fulfilled, and lived – we know and experience something of the love of God far more fully because of Christ's teaching, healing, and self-offering. And this means not only a change in how we love God but one another too. So whether you expect to get a bunch of Valentine's Cards this year or not, each and every one of us is the receiver of the most powerful, most pure, most perfect love: the love of God.

