

28TH JUNE 2020

# FERINTOSH PARISH CHURCH

WORSHIP AT HOME



[www.ferintoshparishchurch.org.uk](http://www.ferintoshparishchurch.org.uk)

Jeremiah Burroughs said, "Contentment is not by addition but by subtraction: seeking to add a thing will not bring contentment. Instead, subtracting from your desires until you are satisfied only with Christ brings contentment."

## HYMN

1 Lord bless and pity us,  
shine on us with your face:  
that your way may be known on earth,  
all nations know your grace.

2 Let people praise you, Lord;  
let all the people praise.  
Oh, let the nations all be glad,  
in songs their voices raise.

3 You'll justly people judge,  
on earth rule nations all.  
Let people praise you, Lord; let them  
praise you, both great and small.

4 The earth her fruit shall yield,  
our God shall blessing send.  
God shall us bless; all shall him fear  
unto earth's utmost end.

## PRAYER

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. As society is re-shaped by Covid 19, let us pray with people left poorly, families bereaved; people delivering professional health care, looking after loved ones at home and others working to create treatments and cures; people engaged in the response of nations and neighbourhoods, of commerce and industry, of service and voluntary organisations, teachers, children, and schools preparing for a new term after the summer holidays for people who are anxious or afraid, alone or isolated.

*Gracious God, we praise You, and through times of difficulty we trust You, for in Jesus Christ You have walked paths more difficult than ours, revealing there a love that nothing defeats, a love that carries us through.*

*We pray, that in these uncertain times we might know and trust that You are with us, our refuge and strength, and that our faith, hope and love might be renewed, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.*

## SCRIPTURE READING JOHN 13: 1 - 10 (NKJV)

1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

2 And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him,

3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God,

4 rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself.

5 After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

6 Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?"

7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."

8 Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

9 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

10 Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you."

## LORD'S PRAYER

*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 this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we forgive our debtors  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.*

# SERMON

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end (John 13:1).

John 13:1 stands at the very centre of the teaching of John's Gospel. Not only does it begin the second half of the Gospel, but it looks both backward to what John has written and forward to what is yet to come. John's key statement is that "having loved his own who were in the world, Jesus loved them to the end."

The first section of John's "Book of the Passion," presents material found nowhere else in the New Testament. It is now the night of the Passover feast, at which Jesus would celebrate His Last Supper with the disciples. This momentous evening, the night before the cross, is unfolded in John chapters 13 to 17. Chapter 13 relates Jesus' symbolic act of washing the disciples' feet. It is followed by a lengthy instruction dealing with Jesus' coming departure and God's provision in His absence, from the end of chapter 13 through chapter 16. Chapter 17 concludes the section with Jesus' "High Priestly Prayer," in which He commits His disciples into the care of the heavenly Father. In all of these events, Jesus was motivated by the knowledge "that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father" (Jn. 13:1).

One reason these chapters are precious to believers is that they highlight Jesus' particular love for "his own." This touches upon a truth emphasised throughout John's Gospel, that there is a people set apart by God the Father for His Son and that these elect people are the objects of a special and saving love. Not that Christ only loved his own. Christ's love for the whole world is strikingly revealed in John. But there is a difference between Christ's love for the world and His love for His own, just as there is a difference in a man's love for his bride compared to his love for others. It is Christ's all-saving love for those who are "his own" that is the concern of these chapters.

How did believers come to be Christ's own? The first answer is that Christ chose them. Jesus says in John 15:16, "You did not choose me, but I chose you." Charles Spurgeon comments: "A man may surely choose his own wife, and Christ chose his own spouse, he chose his own church; and while the Scripture stands, that doctrine can never be eradicated from it." Having chosen us in His gracious love, Jesus made us His own by purchase, redeeming us from our sins through the blood of His cross. Therefore, Paul writes to believers: "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

A second answer is that believers are Christ's own because we were given to Him by the heavenly Father. Jesus said: "All that the Father gives me will come to me... And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day" (John 6:37, 39). Paul writes that God "chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him" (Eph. 1:4). Therefore, Jesus prays in His High Priestly Prayer: "Yours they were, and you gave them to me" (John 17:6).

The first and second reasons why Christians are "Christ's own" centre on God the Son and God the Father. It makes sense that the third reason focuses on God the Spirit. We are Christ's own because we were born again as children of God through the Holy Spirit. The effect of this is that we have taken Christ for our own and given ourselves to Him, so that for us life holds no more glittering crown than to be called "Christ's own".

Spurgeon said, "The fact that you are truly Christ's is the fountain of innumerable pleasures and blessings to your heart. Jesus calls us "his own" - his own sheep, his own disciples, his own friends, his own brethren, the members of his body. What a title for us to wear, "His own"!... Thus he distinguishes us from the rest of mankind, and sets us apart unto himself. "My name shall be named on them," says he... surely, this is the highest honour that can be put upon us even in the last great day."

Knowing that we are Christ's own is even more glorious when we realise how great is the love of Christ for His own. This is the theme of these chapters: "having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end."

The love of Christ for us is mirrored in the love He showed to His first disciples, despite their great unworthiness. Consider these men whom Christ loved! How often they had been foolish, wayward, and unbelieving! All this would be especially revealed in the hour of the cross. Yet, as J. C. Ryle comments, "Knowing perfectly well that they were about to forsake Him shamefully in a very few hours, in full view of their approaching display of weakness and infirmity, our blessed Master did not cease to have loving thoughts of His disciples." This tells us that we can look to the love of Christ despite our failures and sins. However, we might fall short of our calling, believers are still Christ's own and enjoy His unfailing love.

If there was ever a time when we might excuse Jesus for turning His thoughts away from His disciples and turning inward to His own problems, this was the time. Spurgeon writes: "If you and I had to bear all that Christ had to suffer, it would engross our thoughts, we should not be able to think of anything else but that; but it did not engross our Lord's thoughts. He still thought of 'his own'."

Jesus revealed what was closest to His heart as His cross came near. It was His love for His own that dominated His thoughts and feelings, and "having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end." Does this not prove that there is no greater blessing than to be called one of Christ's own? While Christ has chosen His own, it is equally true that anyone who takes Him for Lord and Saviour is one of those chosen. If you will come by faith alone and grace alone to Jesus, then you may know the incomparable blessing of being loved as one of His own.

The particular love of Christ for His own was seen in the calling of His disciples. They came at His invitation: "Come and see" (John 1:39). Matthew, the tax collector, was sitting in his sin when Jesus approached and called, "Follow me" (Mt. 9:9). Peter, James and John were tending their nets when Jesus promised them: "from now on you will be catching men" (Lk. 5:10). Every Christian can look to the same love that called us to faith with effectual grace. Jesus called us not because of what we can give to Him but because of what He can do for us and what He can make of us.

Furthermore, Jesus loved His own by teaching and leading them during the three years of their discipleship. How often had He called them aside for a special word of truth, or patiently borne with their questions and objections. "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples," Jesus told them, "and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32). Likewise, Christians are taught the word of truth in the Scriptures by the ministry of Christ through His Spirit.

Had the disciples been told at the start about the dangers and threats they would face in Jesus' company; they probably would have fled in terror. But Jesus guided them through them all. As the good shepherd, He constantly brought them beside still waters, restored their burdened souls, and led them in paths of righteousness (Ps. 23:2-3). All for love! Every Christian can look back on the life of faith, with many joys and trials, and say of that same love: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Ps. 23:1).

The expression "to the end" can be taken in a number of ways. It can mean that Jesus loved them perfectly or thoroughly, and that is certainly true, for Jesus was about to show the disciples the full extent of His love. But probably the best way to take this is by its temporal meaning. Jesus did not just love them up to this point, but He kept on loving them to the end.

First, Jesus loved His own to the end of His own life. Undoubtedly, this was John's major point of view since this passage takes place in the shadow of the cross. If love for His own required Jesus to die for their sins, then He loved them to that end; the cross was indeed the fullest extent of His love. "Greater love has no one than this," Jesus explained, "that someone lays down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

But this expression, "he loved them to the end," can be taken a second way. Jesus loved His disciples not only to the end of His life but also to the end of their lives. The striking of the shepherd on the cross would scatter the sheep; the disciples would cower in fear, Peter even denying Christ three times the night of His arrest. Yet far more would be demanded of them in years to come. They would be persecuted, afflicted, tempted and tried as they served their Master in the world. How could they even hope to endure, much less to conquer in faith? The answer is that the risen and ascended Christ would continue in His love to the end of their lives.

That leads us to a third and final way to understand Jesus' love "to the end." He loves us to the very end of history, all the way to our eternity in glory. In Hebrew, the expression "to the end" means "forever." And Jesus' love for us abides forever. When this world has passed away and when the cosmos is renewed in the glory of the final reign of Christ, His love for His own will not have changed. Therefore, Paul could say:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?... I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:35-39).

What an encouragement this is for us to rely on Jesus' love now. Do you turn to Jesus' love with your joys and sorrows, with your wants and your needs? He who loved you to His own end on the cross has promised to love you to the very end. Do you realise that being saved by Christ means far more than going to heaven in the end - all important though that is - but also of His love resting upon you all through this present life? More fundamental than our faith in Jesus and our will to live in obedience to Him, is the unchanging, unending, unfailing love of Christ for His own. There is no one more devoted to your good, more sympathetic to your plight, or more interested in your heart than Jesus Christ, who loves His own to the end.

The final words in our reflection on this glorious verse should also be directed to those who have not yet known the love of Jesus for His own. If Jesus loves like this, and if in His divine power and unending life He will always love His own to the very end, how can you afford not to receive this great and saving love? Do you know a love that gladly accepts death in your place? Do you have a love that will even bear your sins before God, so that you may stand spotless in His holy presence, a love that will win you through to an eternity in heaven?

In the end, without the love of Christ, you will be lost. But the day of God's grace is still present, and today should be the day of your salvation through faith in the love of Jesus Christ. Then you will discover how much He has loved you, and how faithfully He will love you as one of His very own, to the very end.

## PARAPHRASE 54

1 I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,  
or to defend his cause,  
maintain the honour of his Word,  
the glory of his cross.

2 Jesus, my God! I know his name,  
his name is all my trust;  
nor will he put my soul to shame,  
nor let my hope be lost.

3 Firm as his throne his promise stands,  
and he can well secure  
what I've committed to his hands  
'til the decisive hour.

4 Then will he own my worthless name  
before his Father's face,  
and in the new Jerusalem  
appoint my soul a place.

## PRAYER

*Lord, help us to know Christ better, to know that He has loved us to the end and to love and trust him more. We pray for His sake and for our good in His name. Amen.*

## BENEDICTION

***And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all this day and forevermore, Amen.***

# WORSHIP UPDATE

It is now over 3 months since we last gathered for worship at Ferintosh Parish Church. So much has taken place since then and the world we were used to will be different from now on.

Given the necessary restrictions imposed on us all and the limits on numbers able to gather it is not possible for us to meet as a congregation and this position is likely to last for a number of months yet.

In order that when we are able to meet as a congregation we do so safely and in a controlled manner a small group of our Kirk Session Elders are working on plans and risk assessments for the use of our church and hall. This work is a requirement of Ross Presbytery in order that any use of a church building has been given proper consideration. These plans and assessments will be important to have for the point where the Government and Presbytery consider it possible for congregations to meet subject to certain limits and behaviour. The group will present their plan to the Kirk Session and then it will be implemented or amended as required by the current advice at that time.

In the meantime please continue to support those around you and share the Worship at Home with friends or neighbours.