

# It's Complicated

Sunday 16 May 2021

## Call to Worship

### *Psalm 1*

Blessed are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked,  
or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers;

**But their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate  
day and night.**

They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its  
season, and their leaves do not wither.

**In all that they do, they prosper.**

The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

**Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the  
congregation of the righteous;**

For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous

**But the way of the wicked will perish.**

## Thine be the glory

Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;  
Endless is the victory, Thou o'er death hast won;  
Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,  
Kept the folded grave clothes where Thy body lay.

Thine be the glory, risen conqu'ring Son,  
Endless is the vict'ry, Thou o'er death hast won.

Lo! Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;  
Lovingly He greets us, scatters fear and gloom;  
Let the church with gladness, hymns of triumph sing;  
For her Lord now liveth, death hath lost its sting.

No more we doubt Thee, glorious Prince of life;  
Life is naught without Thee; aid us in our strife;  
Make us more than conqu'rors, through Thy deathless love:  
Bring us safe through Jordan with Thy power and love.

Reading 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a

### *The Gift of Love*

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. <sup>7</sup> It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

<sup>8</sup> Love never ends.

### Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Creator God,  
from the moment your spirit  
hovered over the waters of this earth,  
we were part of a vision  
held lovingly within your heart.  
From the moment you spoke  
and separated darkness from light,  
you created space  
where we might one day walk.  
From the moment your joy  
spilled out into green and living things,  
your beauty was revealed  
for us to taste and see.  
Creator God,  
for this world,  
beauty and majesty,  
passion and artistry,  
a green and pleasant place,  
we praise your mighty name.

O God, who sent gifts  
of the Holy Spirit to those first saints,  
We know you continue to send gifts to us,  
Even though we do not claim them.

We confess that we have not always opened our gifts.  
We have often chosen to keep them packed away or buried.  
Move us, by your Spirit,  
To pick up our presents, that you so freely give,  
To open them and to spend them lavishly  
On the stewardship of your world.  
We confess to you how often our thoughts and motives are confused,  
Both individually  
And when we are together as your people,  
And that this confusion has often blinded us  
To your interest in our lives.  
Break in on our confusion,  
And astonish us anew, O God!  
Our prayer is that you will claim us again  
And silence within us our desire  
To always have words for every occasion,  
That we might hear the whisper of the wings of your Spirit dove.  
In the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

### Reflection

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

- 1 What word or phrase grabs your attention. Sit with it, let it roll around in your mind.
- 2 What do you think is important about these words? Or are they unimportant? Why?
- 3 What stories from your life could you apply to these words?
- 4 What is God saying to you through these words?

### Notices

#### The Peace

When you share the peace this morning, pause and tell each person your favourite colour. Listen for theirs.

## Come, now is the time

Come, now is the time to worship  
Come, now is the time to give your heart  
Come, just as you are to worship  
Come, just as you are before your God  
Come

One day every tongue will confess You are God  
One day every knee will bow  
Still the greatest treasure remains for those  
Who gladly choose you now

## Jesus, we enthrone you

Jesus, we enthrone You  
We proclaim You are king  
Standing here, in the midst of us  
We raise You up with our praise

And as we worship build Your throne  
And as we worship build Your throne  
And as we worship build Your throne  
Come Lord Jesus and take Your place

## Reading 1 John 4:7-21

<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

<sup>13</sup> By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. <sup>16</sup> So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. <sup>17</sup> Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. <sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment,

and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. <sup>19</sup> We love because he first loved us. <sup>20</sup> Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. <sup>21</sup> The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

## Message      It's Complicated

Imagine you were to meet **an alien** for the first time. They know nothing about human beings and they ask you what love is all about. How would they know love if they saw it? Take a few moments to talk about it with your neighbour. How would you **explain love?**

I don't know about you, but I find it to be incredibly **complicated**. First, there are different kinds of love. Love for a child, love for a sibling, love for a partner. Then, perhaps we attempt to weigh each kind of love. Is one more important than another? If so, then why? Maybe we succeed in coming up with some kind of order for these various loves. Only to find that it really depends on circumstances, that one love might outweigh another in one situation, but be outweighed itself in another. It just gets very complicated.

BUT...complicated does not mean that we give up and walk away. In fact while it can be a tempting response, we often find more joy in discovering a way through the complicated. It can mean that we need to invest more in working it all out, yet the pay-out can far outweigh the cost in the end.

So, I am going to invest in understanding what this love thing is all about. And I would like to invite you to join me on the journey. I have no idea where we are going to end up. It is highly likely that we will discover all sorts of twists and turns along the way. We may find ourselves exploring dead-ends and taking the long way around at times. We will probably come to points where we must agree to disagree – perhaps that is love in action? I know we will be challenged to think differently and certain that we will be called to act differently. There will be a cost to all this because all change requires moving from one place of being or thinking to another. In moving we pay by giving up whatever it is we are moving from. Some may consider the cost negligible. Others may feel it is too great a price to pay. At every moment of the way we need to be looking out for those around us, helping to **support** and encourage, challenge, and confront. We also need to be readying ourselves to be **supported** and encouraged, challenged, and confronted. I can say that because I know that there will be points along the way where each one of us struggle.

By now you may be wondering what you are letting yourself in for. I would love to be able to say, this is what is going to happen and this is where we will end up – a little like a tour guide. The truth is that I am as much along for the ride as anyone. The only difference is that I get to discover what comes next slightly before you do.

Enough of that. Let's dive into the complications and see what we come up with.

Let's begin some definitions. It may seem strange, but I want to start with a little bit of grammar. The basic building blocks of a sentence written in English are a **noun and a verb**. **A noun** is sometimes called a naming word and it refers to a person or object. For example, Jonah or football. A pronoun is a secondary way of referring to a person or object. She or it.

A verb is a doing word – it describes an action or condition. Sit or stand, or broken

A simple example of a noun or pronoun used together could be, **'Anna reads.'** Another, **'He walks.'** These are the most basic sentences. We often see them in children's reading books. Here is my granddaughter Rebekah with her first homework from **school**.

Once we have our noun and verb we can begin to modify them to make them more interesting. Tall Adam walks quickly. The noun and verb are there – Adam walks. The word, 'tall,' describes something about Adam – he is tall. The word, 'quickly,' tells us something about how he is walking.

After that everything gets complicated.

Here's the thing. Love can be both a noun as in the name of something – an emotion or feeling, and a verb – an action like, 'to love dearly.' In fact we could make a valid, though rather uninteresting sentence with the words, 'Love love,' meaning someone loves (an action) love (a feeling). It's no wonder we often find it confusing and difficult to explain what we mean when we talk about love.

But we've only just begun to get complicated. I have talked about the Greek words for love. Here's a quick **refresher**.

Eros: romantic, passionate love

Philia: intimate, authentic friendship

Ludus: playful, flirtatious love

Storge: unconditional, familial love

Philautia: self-love

Pragma: committed, companionate love

Agápe: empathetic, universal love

When we talk about love, love for a neighbour, love for ourselves, love for a child, love for a friend, love for a partner,... they're all different. And because we find it so difficult to explain what we mean we often end up **confusing** one love for another. It is where, 'I love working with you,' edges over into, 'I love your friendship,' and then into unintended romance. It's where, 'I love work,' can take the place of, 'I love my child,' or, 'I love my partner.' And where, 'I love myself,' is ridiculed and made fun of as something that seems not quite right. Often it is not our intent to get wrapped up in these things, it happens because we have failed to name what is happening. And when you don't or can't name what is going on it is very difficult to discern whether what is happening is a good thing or not so good.

I'm planning to dig into the discernment side of things in another message. For now, as we get into the topic I think we need to understand that discerning good relationships requires having suitable language. I realise that not everyone is a scholar of the English language. I'm quite sure there are several of you listening today who could school me in all my inaccuracies and mistakes as far as that is concerned. But let me put it this way. If a builder rocks up to Mitre 10 and says, 'I'm building a thingymibob and I need a couple of whatchamacallits to go in the whateveritis,' the builder is unlikely to get what they require. Or if a farmer runs into the store for his wife and says, 'I have to get some whosiwhatsits for the cakethingy she's making.' Chances are he won't get whatever it was he was supposed to pick up on the way home. Even those of us who struggle with language understand that getting it right matters. Your right and mine may differ to some extent, but in the end, to be able to discern together we need to have a common point of beginning.

So it is with love. When we read, '**Beloved, let us love one another,**' we need a common understanding, a common definition, else without it we will never be able to come together.

Let me head toward the end today with a small beginning on that common understanding. 1 Corinthians 13 is the famous chapter on love. Often read at weddings it begins to delve into how we might understand what love is all about. I don't think it is the last word on the matter. But it's a great place to begin. Verses 4-8 will do us for now.

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. <sup>7</sup> It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

<sup>8</sup> Love never ends.

Here we find a list of things that love is, and love is not. Let's put the list up, all the love is on one side and all the is not on the other.

Love is patient, kind, rejoices in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, never ends.

Love is not envious, boastful, arrogant, rude, irritable, resentful, does not insist on its own way, or rejoice in wrongdoing.

I'm thinking it's quite a list to work through.

1 John 4:8 tells us, 'Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.' Taking what we can see from 1 Corinthians and folding it into 1 John makes it an interesting read...

Beloved, let us be patient and kind with each other, rejoicing in truth bearing with each other, believing each other, hoping for each other, endure with each other. Let us not be envious or boastful, arrogant or rude, irritable or resentful, not insisting on our way or rejoicing in wrongdoing. All that because that is how God is.

You can see why we just say, 'Beloved, let us love one another.' It's so much shorter. And you can also see why we need the rest to help us to understand what we actually mean.

I believe it's time for us as God's people to work through what we actually mean and then to put it into action. We won't ever get it all right. We will make mistakes and misunderstand each other. And we will learn, ever so slowly, to love one another, because love is from God.

### We Pray

God of love, God who is love, God who loves us. It is true to say that we are often slow to hear and understand what you require of us. We mishear, we misrepresent, we do what we want and then wonder why the rest of the world looks at us and wants nothing to do with us. Help us to learn what it means to truly love as you love. Help us to put aside all those love is nots, take up the love is, and be love for our community and our nation.

In the name of Jesus who showed us his love with his life. Amen.



## Just Let Me Say

Just let me say how much I love You  
Let me speak of Your mercy and grace  
Just let me live in the shadow of Your beauty  
Let me see You face to face  
And the earth will shake as Your Word goes forth  
And the heavens can tremble and fall  
But let me say how much I love You  
O my Saviour, my Lord and friend

Just let me hear Your finest whispers  
As You gently call my name  
And let me see Your power and Your glory  
Let me feel Your Spirit's flame  
Let me find You in the desert  
'Til this sand is holy ground  
And I am found completely surrendered  
To You, my Lord and friend

So let me say how much I love You  
With all my heart I long for You  
For I am caught in this passion of knowing  
This endless love I've found in you  
And the depth of grace and forgiveness found  
To be called a child of God  
Just makes me say how much I love You  
Oh my Saviour, my Lord and friend

## Offering

Loving God of both comfort and challenge; we have been blessed to know the feeling of being surrounded in your loving arms like a child. Yet we also know that is not a place we can stay. You send us to be part of the world – with all its ugliness, anger, hate, deceit, and betrayals – but not of the world. You call us to give, so that love, compassion, and hope might be set loose. We are not giving as those who are of the world – expecting to receive in the transaction. We give instead out of gratitude for your loving heart, made known to us in Christ. Use us in this way, we pray in the blessed name of Christ, who by your love overcame death. Amen.

## Prayer for Ourselves and Others

### India and Covid-19

- For the workers who face the sheer horror of cremating so many bodies every day
- For the rural areas who have little or no access to medical help
- That the government might humbly accept responsibility and work to solve the problems rather than denying them

### Mental Health

- For the people on the fringes of our society, placed there by ongoing mental unwellness
- For the people who love them and care for them
- For the health workers struggling to meet the demand for help with too few resources

### House of Breakthrough

- We have guest speaker Owen Pomana here this weekend. We are running a men's event on Friday night and a youth event on Saturday as well as our Sunday service to pray for.
- Final stages of building consent to be tidied up and completed
- Our growing Youth Group
- Roar Conference - which is our annual conference that we run in September at the Opera House.
- Our Worship Pastors equipping workshops to be successful and spread beyond Oamaru

### For the members of our own family

- At home, at Eveline and Tokarahi and Papakaio, spread around this country and around the world.
- Those who are unwell, struggling with daily life in all sorts of way
- Those who hold leadership roles here in the Waitaki

We bring all these prayers and the silent prayers of our hearts before the God who knows us by name, through Jesus who walks with us, and through the Holy Spirit who prays for us with groans that words cannot express. We share in the Prayer Jesus taught us to pray...

## The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in Heaven, holy 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 forever.  
Amen

## The King of Love

The King of love my Shepherd is,  
Whose goodness faileth never;  
I nothing lack if I am his  
And he is mine for ever.

Where streams of living water flow  
My ransomed soul he leadeth,  
And where the verdant pastures grow  
With food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,  
But yet in love he sought me,  
And on his shoulder gently laid,  
And home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill  
With thee, dear Lord, beside me;  
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,  
Thy cross before to guide me.

Thou spread'st a table in my sight;  
Thy unction, grace bestoweth:  
And O what transport of delight  
From thy pure chalice floweth!

And so through all the length of days  
Thy goodness faileth never;  
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise  
Within thy house for ever.

## Benediction and Grace

May the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Love of God,  
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.