

Whose Job is it Anyway?

Sunday 11 July 2021

Call to Worship

Psalm 14

Fools say in their hearts, "There is no God."
They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds;
there is no one who does good.

**The LORD looks down from heaven on humankind
to see if there are any who are wise,
who seek after God.**

They have all gone astray, they are all alike perverse;
there is no one who does good,
no, not one.

**Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers
who eat up my people as they eat bread,
and do not call upon the LORD?**

God is with the company of the righteous.
You would confound the plans of the poor,
but the LORD is their refuge.

**O that deliverance for Israel would come from Zion!
When the LORD restores the fortunes of his people,
Jacob will rejoice; Israel will be glad.**

Glory be to God the Father

Horatius Bonar

Glory be to God the Father,
Glory be to God the Son,
Glory be to God the Spirit,
God Almighty, Three in One!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Glory be to him alone.

Glory be to him who loved us,
Washed us from all sin and stain!
Glory be to him who bought us,
Made us kings with him to reign!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Praise the Lamb that once was slain!

Glory to the King of angels,
Glory to the church's King,
Glory to the King of nations;
Heav'n and earth your praises bring!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
To the King of glory sing!

"Glory, blessing, praise eternal!"
Thus the choir of angels sings.
"Honour, glory, power, dominion!"
Thus its praise creation brings.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Praise the mighty King of kings!

[Reading](#) 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a

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. ² 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. ³ 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.

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

⁸ Love never ends.

[Prayer of Adoration and Confession](#)

The air is chill and the frost lies heavy on the ground
The trees hibernate, no sign of new growth or buds
Surrounding hills bear splashes of snow
And puddles freeze overnight
We have passed the shortest day
Inching, minute by minute toward spring
We search for you, God, in our winter
As we huddle away from the cold, dark nights
We wonder where you are
Stretching out fingers of prayer
Hoping to touch you and be warmed by your presence

Come to us in our darkness
Light our path with hope
Guide our way with mercy
Apart from you we are confused and accident prone
We fall off the trail
Losing our way
We cry to you, 'Come out! Show yourself to us.'
Speak to us
Then we will know you are with us
Still dark, still confused
Still held in your arms
Safe
Amen

[Reflection](#)

[Video](#)

[Notices](#)

[The Peace](#)

[God of wonders](#)

Chris Tomlin

Lord of all creation
Of water, earth, and sky
The heavens are Your tabernacle
Glory to the Lord on High

God of wonders beyond our galaxy
You are holy, holy
The universe declares Your majesty
You are holy, holy

Lord of heaven and earth
Lord of heaven and earth

Early in the morning
I will celebrate the light
And as I stumble through the darkness
I will call Your name by night

Hallelujah to the Lord of heaven and earth

How great is our God

Chris Tomlin

The splendour of a king, clothed in majesty
Let all the earth rejoice, all the earth rejoice
He wraps Himself in light and darkness tries to hide
And trembles at His voice, trembles at His voice

How great is our God
Sing with me how great is our God
And all will see
How great, how great is our God

Age to age He stands and time is in His hands
Beginning and the end, beginning and the end
The Godhead Three in One, Father, Spirit and Son
The Lion and the Lamb, the Lion and the Lamb

Name above all names, worthy of all praise
My heart will sing how great is our God

Reading 1 John 4:7-21

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.

¹³ By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world. ¹⁵ God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

Message Whose Job is it Anyway?

God who invites us to participate in the mystery of life help us to hear what you would say to us this morning as we dwell in your word.

Last week I asked you to think about how you would need support to love someone who is unlovely. Imagine that it is someone on the fringes, involved in things that make you uncomfortable or even afraid. What kind of support would you want from those around you and how would you get it? Take a moment to discuss with your answer with your neighbour. Any thoughts or feedback you would like to share?

Let's get into this week's ponderings.

Isn't it great when someone congratulates you on a job well done? You take pride in your work and then someone else acknowledges the skill you have brought to the task. Whatever you have managed to do, a pat on the back is something that lifts your head and puts a spring in your step. Take a moment to think about how you react when you are told you have done well. What do you think? How do you feel? Tell the person next to you.

I love it when people tell me I have done a good job. It motivates me to keep going and continue to do my best. It's not just the good feeling from the encouragement, although that is fantastic. It is also the joy from helping other people to grow and develop in themselves. Whether it is building a doll's house for my granddaughters, cooking a great potato bake, or preaching a good sermon, knowing that people have appreciated and got something from what I have done is a great sensation.

Conversely, when I am told I have done poorly or made mistakes I can find it difficult. My head can drop and sometimes I can withdraw. There can be a level of sorrow and even shame in the failure. To be honest, I'm much better than I used to be – I've never been much for feeling shame – it's just not part of my psyche. In fact, for the most part I appreciate it when people tell me something wasn't so good or even poor. It does depend on how they tell me and the intent behind the words. But if they don't tell me I will never know and if I don't know, I can't do better next time. And that opportunity to improve matters to me. Take a moment to think about how you react when you are

told you have done poorly or made a mistake. What do you think? How do you feel? Tell the person next to you.

On your chairs when you came in you would have found a sheet of paper with some numbers on it and a pen. We are going to do a small survey. I am going to put a statement on screen and I want you to put a circle around the number that fits your response. I will explain as we go.

Here's the first statement: I feel welcome when I arrive at church on a Sunday morning. A 1 means the welcome I feel is amazing, warm, friendly. A 5 means I feel like I am intruding and am unwelcome. A 3 means, 'It's OK.'

And the second statement: I like the music we have at church. A 1 means it is just the best music ever. A 5 means you hate it and just want to put your hands over your ears. A 3 would mean you don't really care one way or the other.

The third statement: The sermons help me to think about how I approach life. A 1 means the sermons give your thinking a healthy stretch and encourage change and development. A 5 means you don't understand or dislike the topics and would rather be somewhere else. A 3 might mean, 'Meh, take it or leave it.'

Now I seriously hope we are getting more 1s than 5s, but irrespective of what the numbers are, having the opportunity to think about how we are doing is important. Let's say for argument's sake that the average number for the music is 3. That number matters. For me it would mean that I need to spend time listening to how people feel about the music and learning what I can do to improve where we are at. And what if the number is 1? Does that mean that we have reached perfection and just keep doing what we're doing? Not at all. It might mean that we are not stretching ourselves enough and growing in what and how we do our music.

Strange as it may sound, we can apply that whole process to Agape love. Because Agape love is not just a feeling, because it is choice and action rolled together, we can ask questions about how we are doing, and we can learn from the feedback. Let me give you an example. Imagine we are working to engage visitors in a loving way. Somebody new arrives at church. We could give them a small piece of paper like the one I gave you, with a couple of simple questions on it and ask them to leave it in a box on the way out. Then we look at their answers and think about how we can do better. Perhaps they come back a few more times. We could ask them why they are coming back.

All the while we are looking for indicators that the love we are working on is being recognised.

Quick, 'be careful,' here. This is not about play acting. We are not simply looking to pretend that we are loving. When we get feedback we need to allow it to speak into who and how we are.

Which is where I want to focus in on 1 John 4:20. '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.'

You see, there is a test for whether we really do love God and that test hinges around how we treat those around us. And again, this is not about play acting.

There is a saying that some of you might be familiar with. It goes, 'Love the sinner and hate the sin.' It is possible that the person who coined the phrase meant well by it. As with so many well-meant things it has been used to justify all sorts of bad behaviour on the part of those who are more interested in the sin than the sinner. Let me put it this way. The sin and the sinner are entwined, not inextricably, but deeply. Where the sinner goes, there goes the sin. If we hate the sin, by direct implication we hate the sinner. We can dress it up any way we like, but the way we treat the sin will be transferred to the sinner.

'But,' you might say, 'if we love the sinner, does that mean we love the sin?' A question that displays the way we have been manipulated into asking the wrong questions about who God is, to us and for us. I'm going to put up some scriptures that I think can give us some insight.

Think about it this way.

1 John 4:16 tells us that, 'God is...love.'

Psalms 145:17 says, 'The LORD is righteous in everything he does; he is filled with kindness.'

Romans 10:4 says, 'For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.'

Romans 12:19 says, 'Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."'

We could go on for ages. The key points here

- 1 God is love
- 2 God is righteous
- 3 God is filled with kindness

- 4 Christ brings righteousness
- 5 It's not our job to fix things

Here's my takeaway from all that. My job is to love the sinner, in their sin. Do I support the sin? No. Do I like the sin? I hope not. Do I just ignore the sin? I can't because that would mean ignoring the sinner. So what do I do about the sin? You may remember, some time ago I talked about how we define sin. How people like to make little, sometimes long lists of what is sin. And we talked about all the problems that entails. Then I suggested that there is a different way of looking at sin. That of relationship. Sin is whatever it is that causes breakdown in relationship, whether that be with God or other people or even with ourselves. So when I love the sinner, in their sin, I am loving them to restore relationship.

I realise this may all seem a little convoluted and a long way from where we started. I am hoping I can pull all the threads together and we can see where it is going.

Let me begin by saying love, Agape love, isn't easy. It is better to think of it as a Fruit of the Spirit. In other words, we can't just work up a bit of Agape love as if we were cheering on our team at a rugby match. The fruit of love comes as we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. In the same way, we can't just work up some love for God out of the goodness of our hearts. That love is also the fruit of the Holy Spirit at work in us. Similarly, and you can likely guess where I am heading with this, Agape love for our brothers and sisters is also the fruit of the Holy Spirit at work in us. When I Agape love a sinner, that is the fruit of the Holy Spirit at work in me. And the sin? My experience is that the sinner knows their sin without me pointing it out. My experience is also that God is love, God is righteous, God is filled with kindness and Christ will bring righteousness when the time is right for that person. It is simply not my job to fix things. My job is to love someone where they are at. That may mean sitting with them, talking with them, helping them where I can, praying with them, praying for them or even doing nothing at all so God can do what God does. None of that is ignoring the sin. It is simply acknowledging the fact that the sin is not my problem to solve. And neither is the sinner my problem to solve. My problem to solve is me. To answer the question, 'How do I love my brother and sister?'

Did I mention that everyone of us is a sinner?

Bringing all this to a conclusion, we have been talking the last couple of weeks about some principles of practice.

The first three were:

Principle 1: Have high expectations that encourage engagement and self-awareness

Principle 2: Support each other to work together and involve everyone

Principle 3: Learn to construct and apply new knowledge

This week I have covered:

Principle 4: Assess our progress and learn from feedback

Principle 5: Taking it into the real world matters

I do feel as though I am barely scratching the surface of all this. We could spend weeks on every little aspect. I'm trusting that the Holy Spirit will fill in the gaps that my inadequacy always seems to leave. I'm not trying to be unnecessarily humble there, simply acknowledging the size of the task and the time we have.

As always, your feedback, of any variety, is awesome. Not saying I will necessarily enjoy it, but I will certainly appreciate it. Most of all, I would love to hear how you are doing taking your practice of Agape love to a new level. That's your homework for this week.

We Pray

God, how we long for all this to be made easy. To be able to love you and find that everything else just slots into place. Instead, we are faced with problems and people with problems. Issues we prefer not to face, people we prefer not to interact with. Then you tell us to love them, because in doing so we love you. It doesn't make the kind of sense we are looking for. We want the easy way, the simple way, the way of least resistance. And in the face of our resistance you continue to love us. Showing us that loving the sinner really is possible. Teach us to listen, to you, to those around us, even to our inner selves, to learn from what we hear, and to take our learnings into the real world. The world of sin and sinners, where Agape love makes a true difference. Amen

Just let me say

Geoff Bullock

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

Generous and Giving God, you have poured your blessings on us as the rain soaks into our gardens and lawns. You have lavished us with redemption, forgiveness, and grace. When you send the rain to water the grass, you expect growth in return. Remind us this day, as we make our gifts to you, that we have been blessed for a purpose – that we might be a blessing to others. May we grow in compassion, in mercy, in longing for justice and love, as Christ loved us. In that holy name, we pray. Amen.

Prayer for Ourselves and Others

Oh, Lord hear my prayer, Oh, Lord hear my prayer
When I call answer me
Oh, Lord hear my prayer, Oh, Lord hear my prayer
Come and listen to me

Climate change

Storms and flooding, heat waves and cold snaps, collapsed buildings and lost farmland

Leaders

Church leaders around the world, and particularly in New Zealand. Political leaders of nations, of cities, of towns. Community leaders of NGOs and rugby clubs, community service groups and Christian mission organisations

For Palmerston and Waikouaiti

Two churches struggling to survive. Waikouaiti with no expectation of ever having a minister, and Palmerston with reduced and reducing capacity. For their mission to the people of their areas. For them to be encouraged.

Waitaki, esp. Tokarahi

Our parish. For the people of Tokarahi, once a thriving Christian community, now with a few committed people. How to support what God is doing in that community. For Eveline, getting older and slower. How to be the people we are called to be in this time and place.

Ourselves

Those we love. The friends and family who are unwell or struggling with their health. Those who are travelling either in NZ or overseas. Those we long to see in relationship with Jesus. Our personal struggles and needs.

Communion

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light.

And God saw that it was good.

God created the sky and the land and the land produced plants of every kind.

And God saw that it was good.

God created the sun, the moon and the stars and filled the waters and the land with living creatures.

And God saw that it was good.

God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

Then God rested on the 7th day

But we took the good God had done for granted. More than that, we broke the good relationship God had designed between us and the creation, between each other and between us and God. We set ourselves apart as better than, more than, greater than, all that God had made.

We made ourselves gods in our own image

But God had a plan to restore our broken relationships.
Jesus, God's only Son came to live among us

**to proclaim good news to the poor,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes,
the oil of joy
instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.**

And we spurned him, nailing him to a tree, preferring our brokenness to his promise of wholeness.

So God exalted him to the highest place

and gave him the name that is above every name,

**that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.**

This Jesus, who gave his life to bring us back into relationship with God, is the Jesus we remember whenever we celebrate communion.

This Jesus taught us how to pray...

**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**

We invite you, Holy Spirit, to transform these elements, the bread and wine, symbols of Jesus' life given for us, that as we share in this meal together we also might be transformed, becoming a little more Christlike in our words and in our behaviour day by day.

The night before he died, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, gave it to his disciples, and said: Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you; do this to remember me.

After supper he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them and said: Drink this, all of you, for this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins; do this as often as you drink it, to remember me.

Therefore heavenly Father, in this sacrament of the suffering and death of your Son, we now celebrate the wonder of your grace and proclaim the mystery of our faith.

**Christ has died,
Christ has risen,
Christ will come in glory.**

Redeemer God, rich in mercy, infinite in goodness, we were far off until you brought us near and our hands are empty until you fill them. As we eat this bread and drink this cup, through the power of your Holy Spirit feed us with your heavenly food, renew us in your service, unite us in Christ, and bring us to your everlasting kingdom.

O the depths and riches of your wisdom, O God; how unsearchable are your judgements and untraceable your ways.

**From you, and through you,
and for you are all things
To you be the glory for ever
Amen.**

Draw near and receive the body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ in remembrance that he died for us. Let us feed on him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

Father of all, we give you thanks and praise, that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace and opened the gate of glory. May we who share Christ's body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to others; we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world.

You may wish to share in communion this morning, you may not. Know that whatever your choice you are loved beyond measure and we are one in the bond of love.

Will your anchor hold

Priscilla J. Owens

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
when the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
will your anchor drift, or firm remain?

We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll;
fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!

Will your anchor hold in the straits of fear,
when the breakers roar and the reef is near?
While the surges rage, and the wild winds blow,
shall the angry waves then your bark o'erflow?

Will your eyes behold through the morning light
the city of gold and the harbour bright?
Will you anchor safe by the heavenly shore,
when life's storms are past for evermore?

Benediction and Grace

As we go out from this place of worship may we love ourselves and those around us, as sinners, held in the Agape love of Christ.

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.