

Service Transcript

New Year Service 3rd January 2021

Service Leader: Steve Lineham

Communion & Speaker: Mark Reid

Welcome to today's service from Maidstone Road Baptist Church .

I'm leading the first part of the service, later Mark will lead us in communion and bring us God's message - please make sure you have your bread and juice/wine ready for communion.

This is the first service of new year – so Happy new year. The first Sunday of the year is a good time to reflect on the past year and look forward to the new. What a year we have had – nothing like we were expecting or planning – but God was with us through all the topsy turvy ness of the year, and he is with us now and will be with us in this coming year – we have a great promise that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. And God is not some puny being - he is sovereign, he is creator, he is our saviour.

We declare how awesome God is as we say these words from psalm 66 together:

*Shout for joy to God, all the earth!
Sing the glory of his name;
make his praise glorious.
Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!
So great is your power
that your enemies cringe before you.
All the earth bows down to you;
they sing praise to you,
they sing the praises of your name."*

God breaks the power of sin and death – he is the king of glory the king above all kings

*Who breaks the power of sin and darkness
Whose love is mighty and so much stronger
The King of Glory, the King above all kings*

We have just celebrated Jesus coming to our world as a baby – he came to our world to save us, and he calls us to come to him. In Matthew 11 Jesus says *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* Jesus calls us to come to him.

At the start of this new year as individuals and as church – Jesus call us to draw closer to him – to have him present in our lives and the life of his church, to live our lives in his presence – we sing this prayer:

Everything else can wait
I've come to seek Your face
So everything else can wait
I'm here for You
I want to

Just be, here at Your feet
Just be, here on my knees
Here in Your presence I am complete
Jesus, You're all that I need

Everything else can wait
I've come to seek Your face
So everything else can wait
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Just be, here at Your feet
Just be, here on my knees
Here in Your presence I am complete
Jesus, You're all that I need

There's nothing I want more
'Cause nothing matters more
There's nothing I want more, God
'Cause nothing matters more, no no
There's nothing I want more, more than You, oh
'Cause nothing matters more, ohh, oh-ohh
There's nothing I want more, oh
'Cause nothing matters more

I'll just be,...

We pray - Lord Jesus, you make us whole hear this our prayer we pray – thank you for your grace and mercy, thank you that you meet us where we are and call us to a close relationship with you. Thank you for your hand upon us in this last year.

2020 was a difficult year for us in many ways – and, as you can imagine, it was very difficult time for Christian mission around the world – especially thinking of the OM ship Logos Hope – the ship went into lockdown in February, some people went home, about 300 stayed on the ship – update from the ship in this video

(Video Logos Hope in the Bahamas)

As you saw the Ships crew were stuck on the ship for 7 months – not able to leave the ship – thankfully, praise God no one get coronavirus

But How good to see the ships crew serving God in new ways providing much needed help for the people of Abaco island.

Ship currently in Kingstown, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines – due to be there until February 1st
Future – challenging – on a busy day we could have some 10,000 people coming to the ship – not possible in a coronavirus world – what does that mean for the ship ministry

Prayer for ships ministry:

Thank you God for all that the ships crew have been able to do to bless the people of the Abaco islands. We pray Longer term future of the ministry – pray for senior leadership team that they know your wisdom and leading for the future.

Prayer For ourselves – commit 2021 to God:

Father God whatever 2021 holds for us, for good or for ill, individually and as your church, Lord may we know your presence in our lives and in the church, your hand leading and guiding us throughout 2021. May we live our lives in the knowledge of your grace and mercy towards us - knowing that nothing can separate us from your love that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. For your glory and renown we pray.

Whatever the year holds for us may we have the faith and grace to say it is well with us, in him

Communion

As we come to the end of another year, one that has been so full of incident and unprecedented happenings, I'm sure we look back with mixed feelings as we have seen much of what we called our normal lives taken away from us –our routine, our holidays, our ability to visit loved ones, our leisure opportunities, for our ability to do what we want when we want, our freedom in order to fight the pandemic that has raged in our land. For some it has been disastrous – loss of loved ones to Covid-19, loss of jobs, hardship, depression.

What is at the heart of what has happened to the world? We know that the coronavirus was a jump from animals, probably bats to human beings. We don't know how much human activity played a part in that happening, but we do know that it spread because of the interconnected nature of the world we have created for ourselves, and the actions of a minority who have made things worse because they didn't think of others. In the end we see human sinfulness written all over the ills of 2020 and we need to recognise that, bring it before the Lord and ask Him to heal our land.

The purpose of a time of confession, whether it is part of a communion service or not, is to remind ourselves of our own sinfulness and shame, and for those of us who know Jesus, to remind us that the death of Jesus has already saved us from sin and death, when we trusted Him.

But we still live in a sinful world and we have to live with the consequences of sin, daily and bring God's kingdom to those who don't know Jesus. There is a different way: God's way. The purpose of communion is to remind us of the finished work of Jesus as we meet with Him and one another, to affirm as we eat the bread and drink the wine that Jesus' death has brought life and to then be sent by the power of the Spirit to do His work in the world.

As we finish the weirdest year I think you or I will ever live through, I am reminded of a verse in 2 Chronicles 7:14 which you may find familiar:

if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

This is a significant promise that I believe still applies to the people of God today as we look at our fallen world and fallen human race. I am going to play a song based on those verses and after it has run, we shall have a time of silence to reflect and pray for our world, nation and ourselves that that God will bring healing in our land, to His church and into our own lives.

SONG then SILENCE

Father, in this year past we were brought to a standstill in almost every aspect of our lives, which we are still experiencing. We have seen so much in our world and in our society that's wrong, so much that's hopeless, yet in Jesus we see a new and living way. We pray that you will bring healing into our nation, into your church and into our lives, that can only come through recognising our sin and part in it and by trusting only the finished work of Jesus; His broken body and shed blood, and usher in His kingdom in our lives and the lives of others we meet. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

COMMUNION

May we be a people who cry out for our nation, that it's changed; saved, healed as we see the Kingdom of God unfolding person by person. And we do this because of the broken body and shed blood of Jesus in the cross. It's only through the forgiveness Jesus brings and the power of the Holy Spirit, that change can come in our lives, or in the lives of those who need to trust and follow Him, or in our nation. Jesus invited us to remember that regularly, frequently – here are His words of invitation in 1 Corinthians 11.

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

As we break the bread, we remember His body broken for us

As we drink the wine, we remember His blood shed for us.

Father, we thank you for the privilege we have to eat bread and drink wine this morning. Through the death of Jesus on the cross, and His resurrection, by faith we now lead His risen life. Lord Jesus, we thank you that you live in us and with us by Your Holy Spirit. We cannot do anything spiritual of our own accord. We need You every day and every hour. Father, give us a longing for You, a longing for Your presence, a longing for Your word, a longing to see others come to faith in Jesus, a longing to see the kingdom built amongst the people of our community and land. Send us out in the power of Your Spirit to reflect Jesus in our lives and words.

We ask this in His name.

Amen.

Prayers for the Fellowship

For our Fellowship Prayers this morning, let's spend a few moments in silent prayer, remembering those in our fellowship and others we know of who are unwell, in hospital and are struggling with life. Pray too for those we know have been bereaved recently. They need the presence of Christ with them. Let's bring them before the Lord now.

SILENCE

Lord, we lift all these people we have brought before You today. Bring healing, bring hope, bring peace into their lives we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Reading Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Sermon: Sick World. Healthy Church?

We look to a new year, with the prospect ahead of the pandemic being rolled back and normality being restored, although that's likely to be quite a few months ahead in these unpredictable times. But as God's people, do we just wind the clock back to what we were, or does God have something else for us?

These are difficult times as we have to face the twists and turns of the pandemic on a weekly basis. We've been used to predictability and planning, but that's almost gone.

Let's start with a simple truth. God isn't the reason for the pandemic happening; we, as part of the human race are. It's our mess, our sin that we are suffering the consequence of.

But out of our mess, God can and will turn it to His glory if we turn to Him, and commit ourselves afresh to Him. In this new year, I believe that God wants to remind us of the most basic truths of what we should be like as church. In communion this morning, we have focussed, as Jesus commanded, on the most basic truth – that the only reason we have for being here and the only hope we have is as a result of his finished work on the cross. Therefore, we should be desperate for Him, that we may do His will and walk in His way by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Not that 2020 was a total washout. Lockdown and restrictions has brought out the best in many people. It has brought out the best in the church and over the next few weeks we're going to recognise that, because despite the gloom and doom the pandemic brought, I believe that the light of Christ shone through it in the lives of many of His people, and we need to recognise and celebrate that too.

What does that mean for us as church as we enter 2021? What should we be like, and how does the past 9 months help us as a church to fulfil the purposes God has for us? I believe that these verses that were just read represent the foundational principles of what God intends the church of Jesus Christ to be like. There are five of them, and are sometimes called the five-fold ministry of the church. Here's a list for you. The church should be:

COMMITTED TO WORSHIP

COMMITTED TO FELLOWSHIP

COMMITTED TO DISCIPLESHIP

COMMITTED TO SERVICE

COMMITTED TO SHARING

We read that the church devoted themselves to these in the early days. In the next few weeks I am going to explore each of them and see how they apply to us today. What have we learned of them through 2020 that we should continue to apply in 2021?

Before I do that, we need to look at what immediately preceded verses 42-47 of chapter 2 of Acts, which was the Day of Pentecost and it's run-up. What did the disciples do after Jesus ascended into heaven? They waited, they prayed and they were prepared for what was coming even if they didn't quite understand what being filled with the Holy Spirit was about.

After this last 9 months, what should we now be expecting as the prospect of the end of the pandemic is ahead of us? In truth, I'm not sure we really know. I suspect we will have the opportunity to go back to what we were. But can we, should we? Or should we be calling on God; should we be desperate to see His Spirit work in a fresh way in His church here?

What should we do? What did the disciples do?

PATIENT. The first thing we should be prepared to do is to wait expectantly. Here's what Acts 1: 4-5 says *On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*

They were waiting for God to do something. We see the end of the pandemic ahead of us. Should we be waiting for "normal" or waiting expectantly for God to do new things?

PRAYING. If we go down a few verses in Acts 1 we read this of the waiting disciples. Acts 1: ¹⁴ *They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.* If we believe and expect that God wants to use us in new ways in the post-covid future, then we need to pray. In what way? Try starting with something like the wording of the songs we just sang. Spend time with God. One of the positives of the pandemic has been larger prayer meetings on Zoom. Let's allow God to speak to us through our times with Him.

PREPARED. Of course the big day the disciples were prepared for was the day of Pentecost. I'm not sure they even understood what the coming of the Spirit would mean – the speaking of other languages, Peter's sermon, the 3000 new believers. All we know is that they were ready, particularly to go with the flow. My experience of the Spirit being poured out in situations, is that everything happened in a way no-one expected – but it was exciting and welcome. If we wish to call on God for a fresh outpouring of the Spirit, then expect the welcome unexpected.

In ordinary times, we find it difficult to be desperate for God to work in us and through us because we are comfortable for whatever reason. Right now, like the disciples in Jerusalem, we are uncomfortable where we find ourselves. To use an old saying "let go and let God." We have experienced unwelcome surprises, now allow God to give us some welcomed ones and call on Him to do just that.

How do we ready ourselves? It looks as though we are going to be spending some more weeks in Tier 4 – effectively Lockdown. It is good to spend time with God in prayer, and spend time with His written word, the Bible, but if you are watching this you have the internet. With the huge number of online resources for Christians there is so much to watch and learn from. If you don't like the screen, you could even read a paper book or two! Take time to get to know the Lord and His ways more. This is something unprecedented the pandemic has brought us that's positive – time on our hands. So, prepare, lay foundations, that the Spirit may use you as the year unfolds. Let's allow Him

to work in and through us - may we make that difference in the lives of others and in our own! Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, we are living in what are for us are unprecedented times. We know you are not responsible for them, but we know as Your people that you can use this situation for Your glory if we turn to You, and allow Your Spirit to use us. In these coming weeks of waiting to get through the rest of the pandemic tunnel as it were, please make us ready for what Your will is for us as a church, that we may be Your means that Your kingdom is built in our neighbourhood in these dark days. Pour out Your Spirit Lord we pray.

We ask this in Jesus' name

Amen.

And we proclaim: come Lord Jesus, pour out Your Spirit on us today!

Ephesians Benediction

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

That's it for another week. Be blessed and stay safe! Goodbye.