

Service Transcript Sunday 2nd May 2021

Welcome to today's service from Maidstone Road Baptist Church
We are sharing communion together today as part of the service so please make sure you have your bread and juice/wine ready.

I'm leading the first part of the service into session 3 of the Prayer Unanswered course, after that Mark will lead us in communion.

As we think of all our questions and doubts around unanswered prayer it is important to remind ourselves that our God is a God of love and He loves each of us – here is a reading that tells us that

1 John 4 v9-10 Message

This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God.

We sing of God's love for us

377 Charles Wesley.

*LOVE DIVINE, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven to earth come down!
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
All Thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,
Pure unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.*

*Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit
Into every troubled breast!
Let us all in Thee inherit,
Let us find Thy promised rest.
Take away the love of sinning;
Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith, as its beginning,
Set our hearts at liberty.*

*Come, Almighty to deliver,
Let us all Thy grace receive;
Suddenly return, and never,*

*Never more Thy temples leave,
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above,
Pray, and praise Thee without ceasing,
Glory in Thy perfect love.*

*Finish then Thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see Thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in Thee!
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place;
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love and praise.*

Philip Yancey put it so well – there is nothing you can do to make God love you more and nothing you can do to make God love you less.

Our God is faithful He is unchanging, He is dependable our hope is secure in Him

89 Copyright © 1989 Mercy/Vineyard
FAITHFUL ONE, so unchanging, 5:50

***FAITHFUL ONE**, so unchanging,
Ageless One, You're my Rock of peace.
Lord of all, I depend on You,
I call out to You again and again.
I call out to You again and again.
You are my rock in times of trouble.
You lift me up when I fall down.
All through the storm Your love is the anchor,
My hope is in You alone.*

Romans 8: v34-38 Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” ⁸

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God is faithful, he is unchanging, nothing can separate us from his love

We sing again of God’s love for each of us and everyone – after the hymn we will have session 3 of Prayer Unanswered

168 William Rees. HERE IS LOVE vast as the ocean,

*HERE IS LOVE vast as the ocean,
Loving kindness as the flood,
When the Prince of life, our ransom
Shed for us His precious blood.
Who His love will not remember?
Who can cease to sing His praise?
He can never be forgotten
Throughout heaven's eternal days.*

*On the Mount of Crucifixion
Fountains opened deep and wide;
Through the floodgates of God's mercy
Flowed a vast and gracious tide.
Grace and love, like mighty rivers,
Poured incessant from above,
And heaven's peace and perfect justice
Kissed a guilty world in love.*

Session 3 Prayer Unanswered

As in previous weeks, there isn't a full transcript for Petr Greig's video, but here is an outline which may help you with what was covered and some questions for discussion and reflection.

Key verse

"And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' (which means 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?')"

Welcome to session 3 of The Prayer Course II: Unanswered Prayer! As usual we're going to do three things: First, we'll watch a video. Then we'll discuss the questions it provokes. Finally and most importantly, we'll pray.

Last time we thought about Maundy Thursday and asked the heart question: "How am I going to get through this?" Today we're going to think about Good Friday and ask the more intellectual question: "Why am I suffering? Why am I going through this? Why is God letting this happen to me?"

Bible passages from the session

Mark 15:33-34, John 14:12, Genesis 17:17-22, Ephesians 6:10-17

Key points

- Our unanswered prayers can be attributed to **God's world, God's will** or **God's war**
- Miracles have to be the exception rather than the rule because our world is infinitely complicated
- The will of God is often far darker and more painful than we imagine for reasons we can't immediately understand

- Spiritual warfare is real. Sometimes we need to stop fighting against God, and start fighting with him against the enemy of our souls

“There is hope, but that hope will not invalidate your pain...” – Alain Emerson

For Reflection & Discussion

On the cross Jesus asks God “Why have you forsaken me?” Can you describe a time that you felt abandoned or deserted by God when you needed him most?

God’s will: In the book of Isaiah, God says: “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.” (Isaiah 55:8)

Looking back on past disappointments, does anyone have an example of a time when God knew best, even though you didn’t think so at the time?

Why do we find it so hard to trust God?

God’s world: Pete Greig quotes C.S. Lewis saying that, “the very conception of a common, and therefore stable, world demands that [miracles] should be extremely rare.”

Do you agree with this? Should we pray less for miracles or simply trust more when our prayers aren’t answered the way we want?

God’s war:

Is it possible for a tragedy not to be God’s ‘fault’? Do you agree with Pete Greig’s statement that we tend to blame God for things that are Satan’s doing?

Does anyone have an experience of spiritual warfare that they can share?

Prayer

Pete Greig says that “it’s possible to trust even when we don’t understand”. Pray for one another if you are able to do that with someone. As you do so, you may find it helpful to remember God’s words to the apostle Paul: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9)

Today we’ve tried to understand better the things we can, and to trust better when we can’t understand. Here’s a prayer of relinquishment written by George Macdonald. It’s not an easy prayer but you may like to open your hands as a sign of surrender.

*Afresh I seek thee, lead me—once more I pray— Even should it be against my will, thy way.
Let me not feel thee foreign any hour,
Or shrink from thee as an estranged power.
Through doubt, through faith, through bliss, through stark dismay,
Through sunshine, wind, or snow, or fog, or shower, Draw me to thee who art my only day.*

Amen

JESUS TAKE ME AS I AM,
I can come no other way.
Take me deeper into You,
Make my flesh life melt away.
Make me like a precious stone,
Crystal clear and finely honed,
Life of Jesus shining through,
Giving glory back to You.

Communion

We just heard that Jesus didn't just give us answers, or quick fixes to just to get us through, He gave us Himself. Let's allow God to let that truth sink into our lives as we do something practical – as we share in communion together. We think of Jesus's physical suffering as we break bread and His cleansing of our sins as we drink wine. Because of this, He can and will shape us into the person He wants us to be because we have trusted and followed Jesus. As we accept His invitation eat and drink this morning, allow the Holy Spirit to speak into your life.

Let's hear His word's of invitation again from 1 Corinthians 11..

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 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."

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."

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

So as we break this bread, we remember the body of Christ broken for us.
As we drink this wine, we remember the blood of Christ shed for our sins.

Short silence, then **Song – Oceans (part 1)**

You call me out upon the waters
The great unknown
Where feet may fail
And there I find You in the mystery
In oceans deep
My faith will stand

*And I will call upon Your name
And keep my eyes above the waves
When oceans rise
My soul will rest in Your embrace
For I am Yours
You are mine*

*Your grace abounds in deepest waters
Your sovereign hand
Will be my guide
Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me
You've never failed
And You won't start now*

As on the previous occasions, take time to reflect on this morning and discuss the issues and pray with someone else if you can. God really does want to transform us in the way we have prayed to Him in the last few minutes, wherever we are with Him this morning. Allow the Spirit to do His work.

As we close, let's have a few moment's silence, which we can use to pray not just for ourselves butr other people and issues that are on our hearts.

Silence

Oceans (part 2)

*Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders
Let me walk upon the waters
Wherever You would call me
Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander
And my faith will be made stronger
In the presence of my Saviour*

*I will call upon Your name
Keep my eyes above the waves
My soul will rest in Your embrace
I am Yours
And You are mine*

That's it for this morning. Don't forget about Thy Kingdom come – details in Weekly Sheet