**HADLEIGH URC – 10AM SUNDAY WORSHIP – 25 APRIL 2021**Led by Revd Bryn Rickards

1. **WELCOME**

A warm welcome to this time of worshipping God together – whether here or at home – via screen, paper or CD. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

1. **READING: Psalm 24**

In recent years we’ve sometimes used the Scottish psalter to sing some of the psalms to familiar hymn tunes. Today, can’t sing, but I do invite you to enter into the rhythm of the verse and read the words in bold.

So, let’s focus our hearts and minds on God with these words:

*The world and all in it are God’s,*

*all peoples of the earth,*

***For it was founded by the LORD***

***upon the seas beneath.***

*Who may ascend the hill of God,*

*or in his temple stand?*

***The one who shuns false gods and lies,***

***who’s pure in heart and hand.***

*He will find favour from the LORD,*

*and from his Saviour grace.*

***Thus are they blessed, O Jacob’s God,***

***who truly seek your face.***

*You ancient gates, lift up your heads;*

*you doors, be opened wide—*

***So may the King of glory come***

***for ever to abide.***

*But who is this exalted King?*

*What glorious King is he?*

***It is the LORD of strength and might,***

***the LORD of victory.***

*You ancient gates, lift up your heads;*

*you doors, be opened wide—*

***So may the King of glory come***

***for ever to abide.***

*But who is this exalted King?*

*Who can this sovereign be?*

***The LORD Almighty, he is King***

***of glory, none but he.***

1. **SONGS: *You Are the King of Glory* (627) – with PRAYER – & *Majesty* (379)**

Last week we heard the story of how Jesus appeared to his followers and helped them to understand what was written about him in the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms. In the Psalm we just read together, we heard about one who was worthy to ascend the hill of the Lord and enter in through the gates into God’s presence – a king of glory. This is the king we find in Jesus. So, let’s worship him now…

You are the King of Glory

You are the Prince of Peace

You are the Lord of heaven and earth

You're the Son of righteousness

Angels bow down before You

Worship and adore for

You have the words of eternal life

You are Jesus Christ the Lord

Hosanna to the Son of David

Hosanna to the King of Kings

Glory in the highest heaven

for Jesus the Messiah reigns

[extempore prayer]

Majesty, worship His majesty
Unto Jesus be all glory, honour and praise,
Majesty, kingdom authority
Flow from His throne, unto His own
His Anthem raise
So exalt, lift up on high, the name of Jesus
Magnify, come glorify Christ Jesus the King
Majesty, worship His majesty
Jesus who died, now glorified
King of all kings

1. **PRAYER (Lord’s Prayer)**

As we acknowledge Jesus as King, let’s seek God’s kingdom now with the words Jesus taught us: Our Father…

1. **INTRO: Black & White**

[IMAGE] This week it’s a special Wedding Anniversary for Lilly and I – 20 years. Here’s a photo of us on our wedding day all those years ago! Now, my children would have you believe that all they did back then were B&W photos! But, obviously, you know that’s not true! Actually, a friend who came out and took photos of the wedding for us, did a number of B&W shots for us.

There’s something about B&W isn’t there? [IMAGE] Even in the age of colour, these images have their place. They communicate in a different way – give a certain impression. They draw our eyes to the contrasts and textures.

The reason I’m telling you all this is that I think the Apostle John likes B&W. If you’ve had a chance to read through his letter over the last week, you might well have noticed that the language is quite absolute, quite binary. So, you’re either in the light or in the darkness. You’re either a child of God or a child of the devil. You’re in the truth, or you’re a liar. You love or you hate. It’s pretty B&W. And you might even be a bit put off by this kind of rhetoric.

But bear in mind that this is a style, a way of representing reality. Like the B&W photo, it has a purpose: John is bringing important contrasts and textures into sharp relief. Perhaps he’s helping us to see things that we might miss if he told us it all in sophisticated technicolour!?

With his B&W style, [IMAGE] John is focusing our attention on some important contrasts – we mentioned them last week: they’re to do with the way we live, love and believe.

Today, we’re looking at the first of those. So, let’s hear now from the letter…

1. **READING: 1 John 1:5—2:6**

Now the message that we have heard from his Son and announce is this: God is light, and there is no darkness at all in him. If, then, we say that we have fellowship with him, yet at the same time live in the darkness, we are lying both in our words and in our actions. But if we live in the light—just as he is in the light—then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us. But if we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise and do what is right: he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing. If we say that we have not sinned, we make a liar out of God, and his word is not in us.

I am writing this to you, my children, so that you will not sin; but if anyone does sin, we have someone who pleads with the Father on our behalf—Jesus Christ, the righteous one. And Christ himself is the means by which our sins are forgiven, and not our sins only, but also the sins of everyone.

If we obey God's commands, then we are sure that we know him. If we say that we know him, but do not obey his commands, we are liars and there is no truth in us. But if we obey his word, we are the ones whose love for God has really been made perfect. This is how we can be sure that we are in union with God: if we say that we remain in union with God, we should live just as Jesus Christ did.

1. **MESSAGE: Living Confidently – Purified Living**

[SLIDE 1] Last week, we thought about John’s purpose in writing this letter: that he wants the believers to have *confidence* in their faith – that they might know they have eternal life – the life of God – in them – a life that’s connected to God through Jesus.

And in the final verses of today’s passage we see that concern coming through:

*If we obey God's commands,* ***then we are sure that we know him***

***This is how we can be sure that we are in union with God****: …we should live just as Jesus Christ did.*

The first strand of confidence, the first test of spotting genuine faith from the counterfeit – the Bosch rather than the Boosh (if you remember last week!) – the first thing to look out for is how we’re living. That’s what comes out of the good news message they’ve been proclaiming: [SLIDE 2]

*God is light – there is no darkness at all in him.
So* ***if we say that we have “fellowship” with God yet at the same time live in the darkness, we are lying both in our words and in our actions****.*

With his Black and White words, John is helping us to visualise reality:

How can we worship God as Creator and at the same time wilfully trash that creation?
How can we worship God as Redeemer and then treat people as if they were lost causes?
How can we worship God as Judge whilst aiding and abetting global injustice?

That would be hypocrisy. A mask. A lie. It doesn’t figure; it doesn’t fit.

And John comes at from the other angle as well.
It’s not just about avoiding dark things; he says we need to be proactive in living in the light: [SLIDE 2B]

*If we say that we know him, but do not obey his commands, we are liars and there is no truth in us.*

‘In the olden days’, we used to talk about this as “sins of commission and sins of omission”.
You know: that there are things that we’ve done which we shouldn’t have done; and there are things which we should’ve done but haven’t done.

So, the question is not just:
How can we worship God as Creator and at the same time wilfully trash that creation?
But also: How can we know God as Creator and not strive to be eco-friendly?

Not just: How can we worship God as Redeemer and then treat people as if they were lost causes?
But also: How can we know God as Redeemer and not be actively involved in making lives better?

Not just: How can we worship God as Judge whilst aiding and abetting global injustice?
But also: How can we know God as Judge and not be campaigning for justice?

This is the bottom line….

If we’re saying that through Jesus our life is connected with God who is light and love, then how can that life and love not be released and expressed in our homes and churches and workplaces?

And John returns to this idea in another section of his letter – in 2:28 to 3:10 – in those verses he uses the image of **family and family likeness**… [SLIDE 3]

*Those who are children of God do not continue to sin, for God's very nature is in them; and because God is their Father, they cannot continue to sin. Here is the clear difference between God's children and the Devil's children: those who do not do what is right or do not love others are not God's children.*

*You know that Christ is righteous; you should know, then, that everyone who does what is right is God's child.*

He's saying if you’ve been born of God, or ‘born again’ as he puts it in his gospel, then spiritually you’re going to have a kind of genetic resemblance to God.

In my family, the genetic feature that’s been passed down the generations is… (careful!)…
‘the Rickards nose’. If you’re in doubt that someone’s in the Rickards line, then just get them to turn to the side and have a look at their profile – if they’ve got the nose, you can be confident of their lineage!

John is saying there’s a spiritual equivalent: that someone in God’s family is someone who’s life is in the light, a life that shines with love, a life that looks like Jesus’.

[SLIDE 4] So, where does this leave our confidence?? Because, let’s be honest, there aren’t many weeks that we get to the end of and say, ‘wow, I really looked like Jesus this week!’

That’s why the middle section of the verses we looked at today are so important:

We see that God is not expecting us to be sinless! On the contrary:

*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us…*

*If we say that we have not sinned, we make a liar out of God, and his word is not in us.*

No, rather than pretending there’s no problem, we’re invited to confess our sins, to acknowledge the ways in which we fall short, not as a pity fest, but so that we might be forgiven and purified.

Now, that’s not a license to carry on doing the things that we confess. John says:

*I am writing this to you, my children, so that you will not sin*

And that’s what we just noticed him saying about living in the light and living like Jesus

*But* – BUT! – *if anyone does sin* – hand up [SLIDE 5] – *we have someone who pleads with the Father on our behalf—Jesus Christ, the righteous one. And Christ himself is the means by which our sins are forgiven.*

*As he says a little before that: it is the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin.*

‘Cleaning up our act’ and ‘growing into the family likeness’ is only possible because of Jesus. If we’re truly connected to God through Jesus then our life will gradually become more and more purified.

[SLIDE 6] We don’t use air purifiers much in this country do we? But I think we can appreciate the principle they work on?...

“Air purifiers work by sanitizing pollutants, allergens, and toxins in the air…
They do more than simply filtering the air:
because filters remove particles from the air, but purifiers can actually sanitize them”.

Could this be a contemporary metaphor for us?

If we have Jesus in our life, then he is like an Air Purifier in the room of our inner being. If he is there, if he is switched on, then he is filtering out our sin – its removed, its forgiven and gone – and he’s sanitising our sinfulness – he’s sanitizing the pollutants of pride and prejudice and he’s neutralising the toxins of selfishness and greed.

The foundation of our confidence is always Jesus.

When we were talking about living in the light and living like Jesus, maybe you were thinking:
‘how can I live like that?’

*I try my best to be patient and gracious and loving with ‘that person’, but then I just lose it!
I’m making an effort to care for the planet and the poor, but so often my personal convenience still comes first*

Maybe you feel those pollutants and toxins clinging to you?
**The good news is that in Jesus Christ, we find One who can purify us.**

If you are honestly acknowledging your shortcomings before God and genuinely seeking the purifying presence of Jesus in your life, then you *are* on the right track. You can have confidence.

But, just like all metaphors, the example of the air purifier is limited. Because it’s too passive. Our text doesn’t talk about passively existing like a room but about *living* – I suppose that makes us a living room!?

***Live*** *in the light…* ***live*** *as JC did…*

[SLIDE 7] In fact, the word in Greek is literally ‘walk’ – and some English translations keep that word because it better conveys that sense of active effort on our part.

And in that parallel passage in chapter 3, John is quite clear that effort is required:
*“We know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him…****Everyone who has this hope in Christ keeps himself pure****, just as Christ is pure.”*

…

I suppose we could sum up what we’ve been looking at today with that old saying:
 that we can’t just ‘talk the walk’ but we need to ‘walk the talk’.

*Who may ascend the hill of God,*

*or in his temple stand?*

*The one who shuns false gods and lies,
who’s pure in heart and hand*

The grace and forgiveness we find in Jesus does not exempt us from effort or excuse our sins.
But *because* of our confidence in him, there is hope that we can live purified lives.

**…**

So, let’s turn in prayer now to the one who can cleanse us and purify us from all wrong…

1. **SONG: *Purify My Heart* (475)**

Purify my heart

Let me be as gold and precious silver

Purify my heart

Let me be as gold pure gold

*Refiner’s fire*

*My heart’s one desire*

*Is to be holy*

*Set apart for You Lord*

*I choose to be holy*

*Set apart for You my Master*

*Ready to do Your will*

Purify my heart

Cleanse me from within and make me holy

Purify my heart

Cleanse me from my sin deep within

1. **REFLECTIVE / OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Lord, as we have offered ourselves again to you, so we offer our money – whether physically or virtually: we pray that it too would be holy, set apart for you and your kingdom of Light. Amen.

1. **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION (Nigel C)**

Loving God, bearer of miraculous life.

we know that there are people in numbers too great to count

who wait each day for their lives to be changed.

They wait for gifts of healing

They wait for enough food to feed their families.

They wait for opportunities in life.,

which would make each day a delight rather than endless labour.

And in these moments as we pray

Let us close our eyes perhaps

And let us in our minds eye look across the world

see the places on the globe on the maps

and ask for God’s presence in the many places of concern.

In these very moments that we live we pray

with concern, with thanks, and with faith

We see in Hong Kong the last remnants of democracy removed and freedom severely restricted. We pray for your presence there.

We see in Australia displaced people seeking help and asylum seekers placed in island camps - prisoners in their situations. For these people and many like them across the world we pray.

We see in China as a whole peoples in the confines of a dictatorship with freedoms constrained and harsh and secret enforcement. With human rights abuses and the highest number of executions of prisoners of any country in the world. Be there in the places of suffering Loving God.

We see in Myanmar / Burma, men using military force, cowardly denying freedoms and democracy, and killing their own people. We pray for those standing up for justice – those imprisoned for seeking an end to oppression. Bring peace and reconciliation loving God.

We see in Africa how the president of Chad was killed this week on the battlefield. With the armed groups of fighters bringing unrest and the human rights abuses in that country, we pray for stability. Indeed also for the many other African countries and countries around the world in similar unrestful regimes, we pray that your love may grow.

We see the scars of the recent fighting in Armenia. Bring justice peace and healing Loving God.

We see in the United States great divides. Divides on race, divides due to gun culture, divides due to white supremacy in the police system and we see great loss of life and of suffering because of things that are not of love and not of justice. We pray that somehow those who know your love may bridge the divides.

We see in so many places the greed of the rich bringing domination of the ordinary person. Even attempts in the world of football.

We see a great lack of care from governments and from the peoples in places like Brazil and India resulting in sawing cases and deaths from Covid. We pray that your love may bring with it care for ones fellow man.

We see the ravages of the Covid virus across the whole world. We give thanks for the vaccines, the scientists, the drugs, the NHS and care systems and pray that good sense may reign to bring to an end this pandemic. We pray that a good and new normal may appear.

We see our Queen with compassion in the loss of her life-time’s companion. We pray for her and her family in their time of their grief. We give thanks and pray for the continued stability of our nation.

But as we look across the world, despite the great work needed to bring peoples to the foot of the cross of Jesus, to find and to know compassion, justice and love, we have so much to be thankful for. Particularly in the country where we live.

Loving God we pray that the world may be healed and that thankfulness may be carried across the world on love.

Loving God, may love for our fellow human beings become the way in which we live on this earth.

And for ourselves

Heal us from apathy and indifference,

and from cynicism and refusals to believe

that we can be part of bringing change and living hope.

In silence let us pray for the earth and its people

• for particular people places and situations known to us

• where comfort justice and healing are needed

<silent prayer>

May we unite with one another as friends of God and creatures of the earth.

In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

…

We end with a hymn in which we declare our commitment to walk in the Light as he is in the Light

1. **HYMN: *I Want to Walk with Jesus Christ* (261) – verses 1,2,3 & 5**

I want to walk with Jesus Christ,

all the days I live of this life on earth;

to give to Him complete control

of body and of soul.

 *Follow Him, follow Him,*

 *yield your life to Him -*

 *He has conquered death,*

 *He is King of kings;*

 *accept the joy which He gives to those*

 *who yield their lives to Him.*

I want to learn to speak to Him,

to pray to Him, confess my sin,

to open my life and let Him in,

for joy will then be mine.

I want to learn to speak of Him –

my life must show that He lives in me;

my deeds, my thoughts, my words must speak

all of His love for me.

O Holy Spirit of the Lord,

enter now into this heart of mine;

take full control of my selfish will

and make me wholly Thine!

1. **BLESSING**

I end with some words from the letter of Jude, as paraphrased in *The Message:*

*And now to him who can keep you on your feet, standing tall in his bright presence, fresh and celebrating—to our one God, our only Saviour, through Jesus Christ, our Master,
be glory, majesty, strength, and rule – before all time, now, and till the end of all time. Amen!*