



Worship at Home Sunday 23rd February 2025, with Revd Alan Sharp.

StF 66: The steadfast love of the Lord

www.youtube.com/watch?v=PemhmovZRec

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases
His mercies never have come to an end
They are new every morning. New every morning
Great is Thy faithfulness, O Lord. Great is Thy faithfulness.

Repeat verse

Opening prayer *

Lord, fill us with expectation that: as we worship, you will meet us;
as we worship, you will speak your words into our hearts;
as we worship, you will challenge us and change us.

Lord, we are here and we worship you. **Amen.**

Lord, when I am unkind, forgive me. When I am unfair, forgive me.

When I am unfriendly, forgive me.

When I don't treat others the way I would like to be treated, Lord, forgive me. **Amen.**

Bible reading: Luke 6,27-38

"But I say to you that listen, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you. "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

Reflection:

During the last few weeks President Trump has not been out of the news. And J D Vance, his Vice-president is not far behind! Just recently Vance has justified the idea of America First by summarising a very old Catholic concept which most of us have never heard of - “ordo amoris”.

In a TV interview he summarised that concept in these words; *“There’s this old school — and I think it’s a very Christian concept, by the way — that you love your family and then you love your neighbour and then you love your community and then you love your fellow citizens and your own country, and then after that you can focus and prioritise the rest of the world”* And he claimed that the President’s plan to deport millions of people didn’t conflict with his religious beliefs. This comment, and the plan to deport people, has caused a wide debate in America.

Many Catholic theologians say that his understanding of this old principle is wrong or immoral.

A Jesuit, Father James Martin, replied to the Vice-president’s interview by saying it misses the point of Jesus’ Parable of the Good Samaritan. And one article quotes the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Article 2241: *“The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of security and the means of livelihood that he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities should see to it that the natural right is respected, which places a guest under the protection of those who receive him.”*

Vance has been a Catholic for only 5 years so may not have read so far into that Catechism! But I wonder how Vance might feel if he hears this Gospel reading set for today? Just read it again and see how contrary it is to his TV interview. Just consider the following: “Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you”; “Do to others as you would have them do to you”; and especially “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?”

Now, most of us know that these are hard sayings! But we can be glad that Church agencies act on our behalf - Christian Aid, Tearfund, as well as many local agencies that give support to the homeless, refugees and others in need. And if we feel unable to do anything as individuals then we can always give support to such groups.

But we should still feel challenged. “Good News” is a song by an American singing group, “Sweet Honey in the Rock” in which they say “It’s Good News, not Good Times” - in other words the way of Jesus may not be comfortable. Charity might begin at home, but it can’t end there. When we believe that God reached out to the world in the life of Christ, then he gives us an example to follow - to reach out in love. The Good Samaritan reached out with compassion to someone that he might have regarded as an enemy. When we pray “Thy will be done, Thy Kingdom come,” we need to remember that God can’t do that without us.

The comments of Vice-President Vance have caused a lot of comment. If he goes to Church on Sunday, he will almost certainly hear this Gospel read, since we follow an international Lectionary used by Churches around the world. If we ignore the challenge it brings then we fail the Kingdom, and fail to follow Christ. It’s up to each of us to recognise what opportunities we have, to show the compassion of the Gospel.

Hymn StF 249: Jesu, Jesu www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2xclMRm-Ts

*Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love,
show us how to serve the neighbours we have from you.*

Kneels at the feet of his friends, silently washes their feet,
Master who acts as a slave to them. **Refrain**

Neighbours are rich folk and poor, Neighbours are black folk and white,
neighbours are nearby and far away. **Refrain**

These are the ones we should serve, these are the ones we should love,
All these are neighbours to us and you. **Refrain**

Kneel at the feet of our friends, silently washing their feet,
this is the way we should live with you. **Refrain**

We pray for all who live through testing times of war and conflict, where livelihoods are threatened and those who have been displaced seek new homes and places to shelter.

We give thanks for those many communities across the world who have offered refuge to the outsider, offering hospitality that allows people to live in harmony with another.

May politicians and tyrants have wisdom that seeks the best for all people and not power for themselves.

We pray for Christ's Church, in all its variety, and celebrate the many ways in which the story of Jesus is revealed.

May the Holy Spirit guide our Church life, especially as we cope with change.

Help us to value one another, and to cherish our diversity, to turn from prejudice and suspicion to fair-mindedness and acceptance.

And bring healing and hope to all who are coping with illness, disappointment or loss at this time.

We bring our prayers in Christ's name. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn StF 696: For the healing of the nations. www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oi6d2sRUB1c

For the healing of the nations, Lord, we pray with one accord;

for a just and equal sharing of the things that earth affords;

To a life of love in action help us rise and pledge our word.

Lead us forward into freedom; from despair your world release,
that, redeemed from war and hatred, all may come and go in peace.

Show us how through care and goodness fear will die and hope increase.

All that kills abundant living, let it from the earth be banned;
pride of status, race, or schooling, dogmas that obscure your plan.

In our common quest for justice may we hallow life's brief span.

You, Creator God, have written your great name on humankind;
for our growing in your likeness bring the life of Christ to mind,
that by our response and service earth its destiny may find.

Benediction.

Wherever we go, may the joy of God the gracious be with us.

Wherever we go, may the face of Christ the kindly be with us.

Wherever we go, may the compassing of the Spirit be with us.

Wherever we go, may the presence of the Trinity surround us
to bless and to keep us, now and always. **Amen.**

From the Iona Community

Prayers adapted from "Roots on the Web"