

**A Podcast for North Coventry Group – 25 October 2020**  
**- 'Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost'**

Hello and welcome to a podcast for and from the North Coventry Group of United Reformed Churches. This has been prepared for the 25 October, the twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost 2020.

Details of music and sources are in the online transcript, and I would like to thank Erica and Jo for their help in preparing this week's edition.

We gather to worship God, to praise him, hear his Word and reflect on it. As we prepare, listen to ancient words of praise, *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus – holy, holy, holy*. This is in the setting by Gabriel Fauré in his *Requiem*.

**Introductory Music<sup>i</sup>** – *Sanctus, from Requiem by Gabriel Fauré*  
recorded by the Choeur de l'Orchestre de Paris, with  
the Orchestre De Paris, Paavo Järvi & Stephen Betteridge

**Call to Worship: from Psalm 1:**

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers.

**(Music)** *Words from Psalm 1*, arranged by John L Bell  
sung by the Wild Goose Worship Group of the Iona Community,  
from the album *Psalms of Patience, Protest and Praise*.

Setting the scene for our podcast theme, *Brother, sister let me serve you*.

**Hymn:** *Brother, sister let me serve you*  
sung by Wendy Maclean  
from the album *Sing Together Alleluia*

[Unfortunately our licensing arrangements don't permit the reproduction of the words of this song in this transcript.]

**Prayers**

Lord, at a weekend with an extra hour, we pause again for a time of worship. As, in our national behaviour, we acknowledge the approach of winter, we thank you that even in these dark times we already know spring will follow. At a time when we may feel low that the mornings have been dark and the nights are darker, we thank you for the gift of light which comes with each new day.

Shed your light on us now. Spiritual light to chase away dark times in our lives. The light that can guide us in the right direction. The light that helps us to avoid hazards in our path.

We thank you, loving God, for those who share the gospel. We remember those who introduced us to you; those who loved us, who challenged us, who nurtured us; those who answered our questions; and those who encouraged us to grow.

We thank you for our churches and for those who continue to share the good news of Christ in different ways; for all who hear your call.

We thank you for all those who have responded to your call and are active in their local community, showing your love to others. May we see you in those who share the gospel and may we be touched by your holiness.

God said: 'Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.'  
For the times when we have not loved you with all our heart, mind, soul and strength:  
For the times when we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves:  
For the times when we have been guilty of apathy, indolence and indifference:  
Lord, we are sorry, and we ask that you restore your holiness in us.  
Jesus came that we might become holy; let us rejoice in his goodness and grace.  
Amen.

And now as Jesus himself taught us, we pray together, saying:

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen*

**Scripture<sup>ii</sup>:** Leviticus 19.1,2, 15-18

The Lord said to Moses, 'Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.

Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favouritism to the great, but judge your neighbour fairly.

Do not go about spreading slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbour's life. Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbour frankly so that you will not share in their guilt. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbour as yourself.

I am the Lord."

**Scripture:** Matthew 22.34-40

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together.

One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?'

Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'" This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself."

All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.'

## Reflection (1)

The Bible, it seems, is full of commandments, with references in both Old and New Testaments

The Ten Commandments we all know of. We discussed them a couple of weeks ago. Part of the Law of Moses.

In John's gospel you will find the New Commandment of Jesus. John 13.34 *A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you.*

It's supposed to be the way Jesus' followers are recognised, then. Following a commandment.

Our reading from Leviticus comes from the heart of the Law. There are many dozens of instructions in Leviticus. In case this comes in handy for a church quiz night ever, the total number of laws in the OT is said to be? 613

Some of them are very strange – strange to our eyes, anyway.

The people are told not to trim the hair on their temples, and not to trim their beards. At home I don't have to follow the first of those instructions, but am very much **not** encouraged to follow the one about letting the beard just grow.

Then not to have tattoos. Not to allow unusually tall men to become priests. The very idea...

And from the midst of all these thousands of words Jesus produces just 5 – Love your neighbour as yourself.

Now to be honest, it may well be that it was well recognised at the time of Jesus that the Law could be said to hang on the two commandments that Jesus identified. And elsewhere, Jesus summarised the Law on request – for example earlier in Matthew, in the latter stages of the Sermon on the Mount (7.12) we have:

*So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.*

***Do to others what you would have them do to you.***

The so-called Golden Rule. It is a rule for life that you can actually find in a number of other faiths and cultures around the world.

There is a paradox waiting for us, though. And an indication that Jesus was very far from advising his listeners to throw away the rest of the books of the Law – think about the passage right at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus says:

*"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practises and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

So do we take note of all of the commandments? 613 of them? 10 of them? At how basic a level can we take this? How few rules can we get away with? Two of them? Just the one?

**Hymn:**           *A new commandment*  
                          sung by The New Apostolic Church Children's Choir  
                          from the album *Bright and Beautiful*

*A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you – that you love one another as I have loved you. By this shall all men know you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.*

## **Reflection (2)**

Let me digress. Let me talk to you about our son Charles.

He has two degrees in Architecture and lives and works as an artist in Edinburgh, but my mind goes back to when he was still at school in Coventry, maybe about 17 years ago.

Early in secondary school he shone in what they now call food technology but which in my day was home economics. I remember one term's work where there were four or five practical sessions, so that on various Monday evenings we were able to enjoy the delights of apple crumble, savoury mince, pasta bake, scones and something else.

But for each of these Charles was awarded 10 out of 10. 10 out of 10 for cooking. I remember agreeing with the teachers when we ate the spoils at home, and I remember wondering what I would have done if he had brought the stuff home having scored 4 out of 10.

But my point is really about the way these relatively simple dishes could be made well, by just following the recipe. Following a few simple rules to complete a few basic cooking processes.

There are even more basic things we eat that go from raw to cooked in a single cooking operation. How basic can you get? There was a cookery book a friend of ours had in his student days that had cut outs to show what size an average potato was, what size a medium carrot, what size a large egg. It's not the idea of having these pictures that strikes me as funny, it's the thought of him going along to Tesco's and holding up a carrot to the page.... I should say that Adrian is now a Professor of Philosophy at Oxford, though that doesn't mean he can now cook.

My point really is that whatever we cook, it is all based on the same simple rules that Adrian learnt at Cambridge and Charles learnt at Henry's.

I digress. Viewing it as a sort of recipe book is probably not the best way to look at the books of the Law in the Old Testament, but it's one way. Especially if you understand that there are certain fundamentals that you can find if you sift through the whole, without which the rest is just so much garnish.

Time and again in the Old Testament you can see the fundamentals underlying the odd details in the books of the Law.

There is a rule that said to separate yourself from the community and wash in a special ritual way after you have had some sort of rash on your skin. That's because the

community of nomads to whom the Law was revealed could well do without an epidemic of something contagious. Look after your neighbour as you would want to look after yourself. Protect them and shield them.

A rule that says give the new trees that you plant in the Promised Land a three-year period in which their fruit is to be regarded as forbidden. That's because the sort of trees and vines we are talking about need to devote their strength to building themselves up first before they are robust enough to cope with repeated cycles of harvesting.

A last confirmation from Paul the expert – in Galatians 5.13 -

*You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbour as yourself."*

Loving people is responding to them. Loving people is loving them like Jesus loved us – responding to their needs. Which is not the same as responding to wants.

I have spoken before about how the Ten Commandments can be viewed through the lens of loving your neighbour and all contribute to that. The first of them puts all in a divine context.

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*

I said a moment ago that loving people meant responding to them. Loving God means responding to **him**. And if at the heart of what we do in response to God, in loving God, is us treating other people the way **we** would like to be treated, then we, like the people who questioned Jesus, will not be far from the Kingdom of God.

Amen

### **Prayers of Intercession**

God of love, you know that we don't always find loving easy; it demands so much commitment and self-denial; so much thought and imagination; so much courage and faith. God of love: help us to be loving.

Help us to love you with all our hearts, to make our relationship with you the most important thing in our lives, transforming all our relationships.

We pray for those we love and know, who are struggling with ill health, with money worries or simply to cope under the restrictions currently placed on our lives.

Help us to love you with all our souls, to commit the essence of ourselves to you in faith and trust and hope, and to share that saving hope with others.

We pray for the mission of the church, that the restrictions placed on our movements and actions should not also restrict our vision and our ability to make an impact.

Help us to love you with all our minds, to seek your way for our world, your guidance for our lives, your truths that can set humankind free.

We pray for the future of troubled areas in our world, whether in political turmoil or struggling to cope with the impact of Covid-19 on systems and locations already having to manage with too few resources or with extremes of weather. We think especially of those involved in the eleventh hour Brexit negotiations, for the people of the US trying to discern fact from fiction as they make their election choices, and for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh amid the tension between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Help us to love our neighbours as ourselves, to treat one another with respect and understanding, as we seek to meet the deepest human needs and work for the coming of your kingdom of love.

God of love: help us to be loving, in the name of Jesus, Teacher of love.

Amen

**Hymn:** *All my hope on God is founded*, words by Robert Bridges (1844-1930)  
sung by the Choir of Salisbury Cathedral, with John Challenger on organ,  
conducted by David Halls  
from the album *Great Hymns from Salisbury*

All my hope on God is founded;  
he doth still my trust renew,  
me through change and chance he guideth,  
only good and only true.  
God unknown, he alone  
calls my heart to be his own.

Pride of man and earthly glory,  
sword and crown betray his trust;  
what with care and toil he buildeth,  
tower and temple fall to dust.  
But God's power, hour by hour,  
is my temple and my tower.

Daily doth the almighty Giver  
bounteous gifts on us bestow;  
his desire our soul delighteth,  
pleasure leads us where we go.  
Love doth stand at his hand;  
joy doth wait on his command.

God's great goodness aye endureth,  
deep his wisdom, passing thought:  
splendour, light and life attend him,  
beauty springeth out of naught.  
Evermore from his store  
newborn worlds rise and adore.

Still from man to God eternal  
sacrifice of praise be done,  
high above all praises praising  
for the gift of Christ, his Son.  
Christ doth call one and all:  
ye who follow shall not fall.

## Blessing

May we follow the purposes of God and the rules given us by Jesus, and let all know we are his disciples by our love for one another.

And may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with us all today and for ever. Amen

**Music:** *Piano Concerto No. 2 in C Minor, Op. 18 by Sergei Rachmaninov:  
Second mvt. Adagio sostenuto (extract)*  
performed by Eileen Joyce, the London Philharmonic Orchestra  
conducted by Erich Leinsdorf  
taken from the soundtrack album of the film *Brief Encounter*

Thank you for listening to our podcast. Although some of our churches are resuming worship in the church buildings, at present it is our hope to continue podcast production until my retirement from the pastoral ministry at the end of 2020, so long as there is a demand. We always welcome feedback, suggestions, and volunteers to read. Our closing music today was by special request.

A full archive of all of our podcasts is on our website [<https://revdbill.uk>].

### **Credits**

*Sanctus, from Requiem by Gabriel Fauré*, was recorded by the Choeur de l'Orchestre de Paris, with the Orchestre De Paris, conducted by Paavo Järvi

*A setting of Psalm 1*, arranged by John L Bell, was sung by the Wild Goose Worship Group of the Iona Community, and taken from the album *Psalms of Patience, Protest and Praise*.

*Brother, sister let me serve you* was sung by Wendy Maclean, from the album *Sing Together Alleluia*

*A new commandment*, sung by The New Apostolic Church Children's Choir, is on their album *Bright and Beautiful*

*All my hope on God is founded* was sung by the Choir of Salisbury Cathedral, with John Challenger on organ, conducted by David Halls, from the album *Great Hymns from Salisbury*

And an extract from the *Adagio sostenuto, the second movement of the Piano Concerto No. 2 in C Minor, Op. 18* by Sergei Rachmaninov was performed by Eileen Joyce and the London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Erich Leinsdorf and taken from the soundtrack album of the film *Brief Encounter*.

Just in case you are racking your brains to think of where else you have heard Rachmaninov's melody, here is some bonus music, a song from Eric Carmen which reached number 2 in the charts in 1975... and gets quite loud. However, not inappropriate for times of isolation. *All by myself*.

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<sup>i</sup> All music included in this podcast is made available for download under the terms of the PRS for Music Limited Online Music Licence number LE-0019067

<sup>ii</sup> Bible quotations are all taken from the New International Version, Anglicised Edition