



(image: justice & mercy: First Congregational Church of Christ)

We take a breath and come intentionally into God's presence

The Lord be with you: **And also with you.**

Holy Spirit draw us close and minister your grace to us. May we recognise your presence in our midst. **Amen**

### **Bible Reading Matthew 10:24-39**

Jesus said to the twelve disciples, "A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household! "So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

"Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's foes will be members of one's own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."

## Reflection

That's uncomfortable reading! I am not sure if I am being reassured and encouraged, or warned and admonished? Probably both! I think God knows in our humanness we are at times weak and fearful in the face of tension and the unknown, but we are also brave and good and hunger for a better world.

Agonising fear and uncertainty; bravery and action. We have seen so many examples of these over recent weeks with the devastating pandemic and with the Black Lives Matter movement and calls for racial and social justice. We have seen frontline heroes, Captain Tom Moore's fundraising for the NHS, Marcus Rashford's stance and the stirring of a nation for free school meals and against child poverty.

In the reading I think we are being prepared to do the right thing, even if it costs us to do so. And if it does cost us, we are reassured in the knowledge that God, who knows the very number of hairs on our head, will never leave us or forsake us. No matter what happens if we stand up God has our soul and nothing or no one can take that away or destroy it.

Jesus recognizes that fear can stop us living out our best discipleship and a life of grace in the world. But why are we asked to cause unrest within our family?

Well we know elsewhere we are commanded to love and honour our families, and to work for peace, so I don't read this as literal but rather a literary exaggeration to draw attention to a point, which I think is to warn us that worrying too much about what others even family might think or how they will react can hinder us from doing what is right and what God has called us to do. One day (hopefully in the very distant future!) we will all come before God's throne, on our own, and although Jesus will understand our humanness with its failings and shortcomings, we don't really want to have to say "Yes I heard you calling but my husband/wife/child didn't really want me to 'welcome that stranger, give to a foodbank, go to Church, speak out against injustice, talk about God's healing grace in my life...". How much better to be able to stand boldly before God knowing we bravely did the best we could to serve God and one another and to make the world a better place?

I'll end with a quote from Bishop Desmond Tutu 'God's dream is that you and I and all of us will realize that we are family, that we are made for togetherness, for goodness, and for compassion'.

Amen

## A Smile

A young boy celebrated his birthday on crutches, so he couldn't carry the cupcakes without help. The Sunday School teacher asked another child Noah to help. "I could," Noah said, "but I'd prefer not to." Spotting a teaching moment, the teacher asked Noah, "What would Jesus do?" Noah answered, "Jesus would heal him so he could carry his own cupcakes." —*Rachel Nichols*

## **Worship**

Fight the Good Fight Truro Cathedral Choir:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nVu7epY8WNE>

There is a Green Hill: Lucy Gibson (attached)

Beneath the Cross (with lyrics) Keith and Kristyn Getty:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbaHBmxckC8>

## **Prayers**

*As we enter refugee awareness week our first prayer today comes from Carissa Van Haitsma, Office of Social Justice, Christian Reformed Church.*

Dear Lord, our shelter  
and refuge for the oppressed,  
we praise you for your ultimate power  
and unsurpassable love.  
We thank you for your unfailing justice and  
we thank you for never forsaking those who love you.

O Lord of compassion,  
we ask for your continued mercy for those who seek shelter,  
for the refugees and immigrants in our midst.  
We pray especially for those living in fear;  
those who risk deportation and imprisonment.

Lord, we thank you for loving the stranger,  
and we ask you to protect those who are vulnerable,  
the trafficked and those without documentation.

**We turn to you, God of refuge, power, love, and compassion,  
through Jesus Christ, in whom we pray.**

**Amen.**

We pray for wisdom and guidance for those who govern  
and for those working to right injustices.

We pray an end to the damaging 'hostile environment' created in our immigration  
system and remember before you those of the Windrush generation who suffered  
illegally. For those wrongly expelled and poorly treated.

As the church reflects and apologises this week for its active part in slavery, help us to  
heal the wrongs and strengthen us to stand up against injustices in all its forms.

May we care for all our neighbours as for ourselves and our own families.

**We turn to you, God of refuge, power, love, and compassion,  
through Jesus Christ, in whom we pray.**

**Amen**

We pray for all who are hungry and for families who are struggling to cope.  
We thank-you for foodbanks and other food parcel schemes  
and those who generously fund and support them.  
May government policies and social care systems adequately support those in need and  
the most vulnerable in our society.

**We turn to you, God of refuge, power, love, and compassion,  
through Jesus Christ, in whom we pray.**

**Amen**

We pray for all who are unwell, those who live with pain and those waiting for  
operations.  
We pray for those who struggle in body, mind or spirit and those who care for them.  
Surround them with your healing love and grace and the knowledge that they are  
deeply precious to you.  
We lift before you the needs of our families, friends, neighbours, schools and  
communities.

**We turn to you, God of refuge, power, love, and compassion,  
through Jesus Christ, in whom we pray.**

**Amen**

We commend to your safe eternal keeping those who have recently died  
and ask your comfort for those who grieve.  
We give thanks for those whom we have known and loved and thank-you for the  
reassurance in you of eternal life where we will one day be reunited.

**We turn to you, God of refuge, power, love, and compassion,  
through Jesus Christ, in whom we pray.**

**Amen**

*In this moment of stillness we lift before you the prayers we carry in our own hearts  
.....*

*Joining all our prayers together we say the prayer our saviour taught us:*

**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 them that 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.**

## **Blessing**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord: and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be with you and those you love always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve one another: **In the name of Christ Amen.**