

Suggested outline for family worship – Sunday 29th March at 11.00am

Prayer

Song suggestion: “May the peoples praise you” by Keith & Kristyn Getty – watch and sing along at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7BrfkjHdKVI>

Reading: Colossians 2:1-7 (New Living Translation)

¹I want you to know how much I have agonised for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other believers who have never met me personally. ²I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God’s mysterious plan, which is Christ himself. ³In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴I am telling you this so no one will deceive you with well-crafted arguments. ⁵For though I am far away from you, my heart is with you. And I rejoice that you are living as you should and that your faith in Christ is strong.

⁶And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him.

⁷Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

Devotion:

Patience, patience...

We’re not used to living like this... Shut in except for:

- trips to the shop for basic necessities only, such as food and medicine;
- one form of exercise a day - including a run, walk or cycle;
- any medical need - Including to provide care or help vulnerable people;
- travelling to and from work - but only when this is absolutely necessary and can’t be done from home.

It’s going to require a great deal of patience from us, isn’t it? So what to do while we’re waiting – that’s the question. Paul has a few suggestions for us in Col 2:6-7.

“Continue to follow Jesus” – it’s a must; there’s no question about not doing it – we must do it; it’s a necessity – it’s every bit as important as having welcomed Jesus as our Saviour in the first place! And it’s up to us, individually and together, to ensure that it happens – we’re to be hands-on in continuing to live not just *for* Jesus but *in* Jesus – relying on his presence with us and drawing on his power within us. And we have to do this continuously – not as a one-off action, not in fits and starts, but every moment of every day. We must continue to follow him by behaving in ways that are in keeping with being a follower of Jesus. And it’s up to us to see that this happens – it’s Jesus that does the saving but it’s us that do the living in him, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

“Let your roots grow down into him”, says Paul – just as the roots of a tree expand and go deeper as the tree grows, so Christian men, women and young people find that the more we live the way Jesus wants us to live the deeper we become rooted in him – and the deeper we’re rooted in him the more we live the way he wants us to live. Being rooted in Jesus enables God to give us *“everything we need for living a godly life...”* 2 Pet 1:3 tells us. Just as a good root system is vital for a tree to grow healthy and strong so it is for a Christian, too –

the more we allow Jesus to be in control of our lives, the better our root systems become in him and the more we find everything we need to flourish and grow in him – and so it goes on with every day that passes. Having a lot more time to fill, these days, maybe we could spend some of it doing what often gets squeezed out in the busyness of ‘normal’ life – reading the Bible and learning more of what it teaches us about God, about ourselves and about the world in which we live.

“Let your lives be built on him”. Having watched several builders at work, I’ve noticed that they begin with the corners rather than the straight walls in between – that’s to make sure that the whole building is properly aligned and tied together – the Bible talks about that too when it uses the word ‘cornerstone’ – a big stone placed at the point where two walls come together. Paul talks about Jesus as ‘the cornerstone’ in the lives of Christians – and as we continue to live in him so all our godly actions and thoughts and words come together like stones of a building, held together by Jesus, the cornerstone, producing a building that declares how great and good God really is!

“Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught”. Trees grow strong through the food they receive from the ground in which they’re growing, the sunlight shining on them, the rain that soaks them and so on. Followers of Jesus grow strong through the teaching that’s been handed down to us in the Bible from prophets, Jesus and the apostles as to how we are to live in relationship with God and other people. And as we become familiar with more and more of the Bible’s contents and teaching, so we become more at home in ‘the Christian faith’; more confident in what it is and what it teaches and what it requires of us; more able to share what we’ve learned and experienced of God with others.

If we continue to follow Jesus, let our roots grow down into him and let our lives be built on him, then not only will our faith grow strong in the truth we were taught but we will “overflow with thankfulness” says Paul. It’s the picture of a river bursting its banks – a picture we’re pretty familiar with along the Dunadry Road as the Sixmile River overflows from time to time after a period of heavy rain. Rain in the Bible is often a picture of God’s grace and mercy – “the rain falls on the just and the unjust” – and in a land like Israel where water is such a precious commodity, rain is a real blessing, bringing the land to life and sustaining life that’s already there. The Lord showers all manner of blessings upon us in our day to day lives – none more important than our salvation in Jesus – and such a sense of gratitude and thankfulness wells up within us that we can’t possibly contain it and it overflows into our situations and circumstances, and the lives of the people sharing them with us.

Life may be very different for us at the moment but let’s use the time to deepen our roots in Jesus and God’s Word, so that we’ll be better followers of Jesus wherever we might be now and in the future!

Prayers – you might want to ask each member of the family to pray or you might want to lead everyone in prayer, yourself, based on some of the thoughts shared in the devotion.

Song suggestion: “My heart is filled with thankfulness” – watch and sing along at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQVm06EhJnl>

Activity for Children: *(Full family participation encouraged for this one)*

I wonder how many of you remember making forts when you were younger? You would have collected anything you could find, hoping that by the end of it, you would be left with something that somewhat resembles a tent.

If you would like to try re-enacting that with your children today, you can collect up some pillows, blankets, sheets etc (*creative freedom*) and build a fort together. Whilst building the fort, encourage your child to really think about a few things:

- (1) Which items will they use to build the fort and why?
- (2) Where will each item go in the fort and why?
- (3) What needs to be put on the bottom of the fort for everything else to be built upon?

It's so important that in order for the fort to stand up by itself and be what it was intended to be, that the correct foundation has been set down first all. Even as people there's things that we have to do every day so that we can grow up nice and healthy and you could discuss some of these things are with your children (eg: sleeping, eating, drinking water etc.) As Christians; the people who love and follow God we also need help to grow into the people that God wants us to be, and one of the ways we can do that is by reading the bible, and listening to what God is saying, because what God says is always truth.

Fort's can often be referred to as a place of shelter & protection, a safe place and a place of comfort. Currently our children may be feeling scared or unsettled but we can point them to the one that offers us protection and comfort in knowing he is always in control and a helpful way to remind ourselves of this truth is to learn the truths that he has provided us with.

To finish, why don't you discuss with your children some of the promises and comforting truths that God has revealed to us in the bible, and then pick and write a verse on a piece of paper, because after all, every good fort needs a welcome sign to stick up to the front! Please once again send any pictures of your completed forts and verses to Hayley (07598329604) and they will be uploaded on the Church Facebook page so that once again your children can see that though we are apart, as a church we are very much together.