

## Family Worship – Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Hello everyone and thanks for joining us for another week of Family Worship.

If you have access to Facebook, please go to our Facebook page where you'll find today's Family Worship on video: [www.facebook.com/muckamorepc](http://www.facebook.com/muckamorepc)

If you don't have access to Facebook, here's some of the contents for you to read.

One of the things we said last week was that the God we worship today is the same God that Elijah and Elisha worshipped. As we'll see from what the Apostle Paul says to Timothy, this God hasn't lost any of his ancient power that was demonstrated again and again in such amazing ways in OT times.

Please pray together, giving thanks to God for being such a great God – great in himself and great in all he does. Ask him to forgive us for all the ways in which we have fallen short, overstepped or been out of line with God's standards for how we are to live our lives each day. Ask him to strengthen us so that we are able to honour him as we should.

Then read the Bible passage we'll be looking at together for yourselves – it's 2nd Timothy 1:1-14 – if there's more than one of you, perhaps you could take it in turn to read.

Sermon: "How small is your picture of God?"

One of the things we noted last week as we looked at how Elijah's role as the Lord's prophet in Israel was handed on to Elisha was that the God we worship today is the same God as Elijah and Elisha worshipped. Yes, the world of our day is very different from theirs; our culture is very different from theirs; our aspirations are different from the people of their day; and there are light years of a difference in our technology from their horses and chariots! Yet, the God of 850BC is no different today from he was then; just as powerful today as he was then; just as involved in everyday life as he was then – in fact, in an even more personal way today because the Holy Spirit is no longer simply given to a particular person at a particular time for a particular purpose – his presence is now an everyday reality for people everywhere – making us aware of right and wrong and God's verdict on it all.

And yet, there are times when it feels as if God is remote from us – up there somewhere in the blue yonder rather than down here in the nitty-gritty of daily life. There are times when he appears to be of no help to us; times when it feels as if he has left us on our own. Have you ever felt like that? I have. But one of the things I've learnt from the Bible over the years is that none of these 'feelings' reflect the reality of our situation. For example, David asks in Ps 139 *"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast"*. The Lord doesn't leave his people on their own. He isn't isolated from us. He isn't remote from us. Rather, he is working in all the different experiences of life for his glory and our good, and he has the power to fulfil all the plans and purposes which He has for our lives – yes, even in the middle of a global pandemic! We often fail to realise fully who God is and what he is capable of doing in us, for us and with us, and as a result we have a very small picture of God.

The Apostle Paul certainly had no small picture of God. He was a man who had come to meet the Lord in such a personal way that he came to trust him implicitly, constantly encouraging other people to follow his example. Timothy was one of those people. Paul had known Timothy's family for a long time, and he'd watched Timothy grow up not just as a person, but as a Christian, and must've been overjoyed to share in Timothy's ordination service as he entered the Christian ministry. Some time later, Paul wrote to encourage him in his work as a minister, and in the opening paragraphs of his letter, Paul gives Timothy a wonderful description of the God he has come to know and love and serve – the God who is infinite, eternal and unchangeable; at one and the same time Father, Son and Spirit – three 'persons' – the same in substance, equal in power

and glory – acting together as one in distinctive ways to bring about the divine plans and purposes for the world and its people. And Paul illustrates that so well as he reminds Timothy of God’s power and what that power accomplishes not only in *his* life, but in the life of everyone who puts their trust in the Lord.

In vs.8-9 we read: *“Do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the Gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life – not because of anything that we have done but because of His own purpose and grace”*. Here we have an important reminder that Christians don’t live our lives on our own. We don’t do things in our own strength, but rather through the power that God supplies by His grace to every believer. You see, our God is not a passive God. He’s not a lifeless, inanimate object like the gods we read of in OT days, or indeed those we learn of from missionaries who work among tribal peoples today; gods of wood or stone or precious metals or human imagination! These gods have no power except what human beings attach to them. But the Bible gives many examples of God’s power and strength. Haven’t we seen some of those as we followed Elijah through 1<sup>st</sup> Kings? – at Kerith, Zarephath, Carmel, in the desert, at Horeb and finally at the Jordan when he was taken away by the Lord in a whirlwind. The God who acted with such power in Elijah’s day is the God who is the same yesterday, today and forever, the God who’d made himself known to Paul, the God who’d changed his life! But Paul found himself on the receiving end of some rather unpleasant experiences during the course of his life – experiences that threatened his happiness, his freedom, his peace of mind, even his very life, and he points out to Timothy that he too should expect similar experiences. But *in* those times of difficulty and darkness, Paul urges Timothy to make full use of the power that God has graciously made available to him.

*“Remember”, he says, “you haven’t become the kind of person you are through anything that you did by yourself. It was all God’s idea! And it’s been accomplished by God’s power – power that lives in you since he saved you and called you into the holy life that you’re living”*. And that’s true – not just for Timothy – it’s true for every individual who puts their trust in the Lord.

Now look at vs 9-10: *“This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel”*. God’s idea of enabling people to live a whole new way of life wasn’t a last minute flash of inspiration – it was a gift prepared long before anyone knew anything about it. And the bones of that idea were quite literally fleshed out in God the Son becoming a human being in the person of Jesus Christ. Through his atoning work on the cross, we can find new life – eternal life. A lot of people these days, aren’t willing to accept that truth, though. They look for ‘life’ in all sorts of other places, people and things. But it’s not there – and no matter how much it might look as if it is, it’ll always turn out to be a dead-end; at some point or other, the bubble bursts; the excitement passes; the success is gone; and blandness, boredom, despondency and even despair become the order of the day. Is there no escape? Is there nothing that can be done to change things? Christianity says ‘yes’; absolutely. A personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ opens up a whole new kind of life for us; life that begins now and that goes on forever, even beyond the grave, if we die before Jesus returns to wrap up this broken world and God makes everything new. But this new life is only possible because of what Jesus did – dying on a cross to deal with sin and the damage it has done to our relationship, with God; and coming back to life so that the rest of us human beings could enjoy that new life, too – how? Only through faith in Jesus; allowing him to do for us what he says he can do – enable us to be made right with God and to find life, real life, true life, eternal life in him. Jesus has defeated death and made eternal life not just a possibility but a reality for all who give him his rightful place in their lives as Saviour and Lord.

But look again at 2 Tim 1 – this time v.14: *“Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you – guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us”*. The truth of the matter is that if we were left by the Lord to look after our own lives, we wouldn’t make a very good job of it. We wouldn’t

have the power to overcome the temptations that the world, the flesh and the Devil bring our way. We'd drift back into our old ways. But Paul reminds us here that God the Spirit lives in us, and we should use His help to guard what we've been taught and come to believe from God's Word. He's already told us in v.7 that the Spirit brings three things into our lives: power, love and self-control. Power to overcome temptation. Love to help others for Christ's sake. Self-control to help us live God's way.

What an amazing God we have! He's at work in our lives. The Father gives us life that no-one or nothing can take it from us; life that becomes eternal through the grace he has given us in our Saviour, Jesus Christ. And he enables us to guard what we've been taught and come to believe from God's Word by the power of His Spirit living in us. All of this enables us to say with Paul, v.12: "I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return".

Tell me, how small is God to you? Is he so small that you feel you can ignore him or as if you're on your own? Or have you discovered Him to be the God through whom Paul said, "I can do all things"? You know, when I was younger I used to think that Paul was talking about doing the impossible when he said, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me". I thought that meant Paul could fly without an aeroplane, or swim to the bottom of the ocean without a submarine! But when you take a proper look at Phil 4, you discover that what Paul means is that he can face up to any and every situation in life, whether good or bad, happy or sad, for richer or poorer, and so on, through the power that God brings into his life by faith in Jesus Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit. He realised that God could enable him to face up to anything that life threw his way. That's not to say that the experiences of life aren't difficult or heart-breaking or painful – they can be. But it is to say, that we can only keep going, we can only come out the other end of the tunnel through the Lord's power – the power of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit acting together to bring life, salvation and strength to us as we trust the Lord and live in his grace.

Please pray for others as you finish:

1. Pray for folks in the congregation for whom the upsurge in the virus will mean additional pressures because they work in health or social care settings, public services such as transport, provide care for loved ones at home or because they're older or live alone.
2. Pray for people who have medical conditions for which they've been receiving treatment over a long period of time or who have recently been diagnosed with serious conditions that will have a big impact on their future daily life and require help and support from family.
3. Pray for the leaders of our youth organisations such as GB, BB and The Hub as they explore ways to keep in contact with their young people or provide activities for them online or within our buildings over the next few months.

Thanks for joining with us today. And may the blessing of the Lord God be upon you and all whom you love. Amen