

Church Together

Growing In Christ

The Width, Length, Height And Depth Of Jesus' Love

18th February 2024



Welcome

Today's Service we will be looking at: **Ephesians 3 v. 1 - 21**

The theme for our service today is: **Growing In Christ - The Width, Length, Height And Depth Of Jesus' Love**

Today our service also includes: **Communion**

We hope that you will be able to engage with everything that has been produced for today's service and that you would be able to **Know That Growing In Christ Enables Us To Know The Greatness And Enormity Of His Love Towards Us**

Call To Worship

Psalm 121 v. 1 – 8 NLT

I look to the mountains –

Does my help come from there?

My help comes from the Lord,

Who made the heavens and the earth!

He will not let you stumble and fall; The one who watches over you will not sleep.

Indeed, he who watches over Israel Never tires and never sleeps.

The Lord himself watches over you! The Lord stands beside you as your Protective shade.

The sun will not hurt you by day, Nor the moon at night.

The Lord keeps you from all evil And preserves your life.

The Lord keeps watch over you as you come and go,

Both now and forever.

Opening Prayer

Lord, we thank you that we are able to come and meet together in your name today. As we gather we come as individuals, but also as a fellowship of believers together. We recognise that although we are all different, we are all bound together through your love that was shown to us by Jesus. Therefore, we thank you loving Lord that we can come together this morning to worship and offer our praise and thanks to you.

Be with us in our worship today Lord as we look at your word this morning, guide us we pray as we try and understand what your word has to say to us both as individuals and as a church. Lord with you all things are possible, therefore, help us to live our lives full of your love and wisdom. Encourage us we pray to work together for your kingdom in and through your name we pray.

Amen

Ephesians 3:20

He is able to do
exceedingly
abundantly

above

all that we ask

or think,

according

to His power

that works in us.

Song Suggestion

Amazing Grace, How Sweet The
Sound



The Lord's Prayer

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.
Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power
And the glory, forever and ever.
Amen

Setting The Scene

From a shop or supermarket, buy a tube of Love Hearts. These, you may remember from your childhood, are round, sherbet sweets on which are printed a heart and a message such as '**Yours for ever**' or '**Be my friend**'. In recent years, they have been relaunched with surprisingly modern equivalents, such as '**E - mail me**' and '**Cute kid**'. Bizarrely, the current messages also include '**Bless me**' and '**Be my icon**'. Open them and read the top couple, laughing at the message, and eating them as you do so. Today, in one way or another, all those gathered are going to hear about the love of Jesus: how we grow to understand it, how we sometimes reject it and the marvellous difference it can make.

Explain that it has occurred to you to wonder: If Jesus was going to write a message to this church on a **Love Heart**, what would it say? Would it be a message of love? Would it ask us to do something for him? Would it reassure us? Suggest that the congregation turn to those next to them, adults, and together think of some ideas in twos and threes. Remind them what the question is: **If Jesus sent us a message about his love, short enough to be written on a sweet, what might it be?**

After about a minute, regain attention and ask for suggestions. Every time someone calls out a reply, reward it with warm approval and one of the sweets from your tube. Read out each Love Heart that you give out and

make a comment about whether what is written on the sweet is something suitable for us to say in reply to Jesus! Continue by saying that you have been giving this question some thought already, and your suggestion is that Jesus might say, **'My love for you is wider and longer and higher and deeper than you will ever know.'** Of course, he could never fit all that on a sweet, but then **Jesus'** love is so wide and long and high and deep that it could not be expressed on all the sweets that have ever been eaten in all the world.

Conclude by reading from **Ephesians 3 v. 17b, 18** which says: 'And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ', is the prayer that Paul wrote two thousand years ago for his friends.

Heart Shaped Prayers

Follow the '**Setting the scene**' introduction by giving everyone a pencil and a piece of paper on which a heart is drawn. Encourage everyone to write an appropriate message to Jesus inside the heart. If they do not feel like writing, they may draw a picture for him. Give about two minutes for this to be completed.

Collect the papers and bring them to the front of the room. (**While this is being doing, a hymn of gentle worship could be sung.**) Place the congregation's offerings on a tray and set them on a table at the front of the room.

Commit these prayers to God with this prayer, which is spoken by the leader and echoed, line by line, by the congregation:

Lord Jesus, we love you ...

Thank you for loving us ...

This is our offering of worship ...

May it bring you joy ...

Amen

The fullness of God is not about how far you have delved in God, whether in depth, breadth, width or height but rather



HOW FAR GOD HAS
DELVED IN YOU.

Bible Reading

Ephesians 3 v. 1 – 21 NIV

God's Marvellous Plan for the Gentiles

3 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. 6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. 8 Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, 9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. 10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. 13 I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged be- cause of my

sufferings for you, which are your glory.

A Prayer for the Ephesians

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth de-

16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so

that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18

may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the

love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all

the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at

work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!

Amen.

Tithes, Gifts & Offerings

No matter wherever you are, whatever you do, whoever you are, together we can grow as Church Together here at Salendine Nook.

If you feel that your are able to, then please keep on giving with a cheerful and grateful heart, praising God for all that he has given to you and share in the finances of the church.



Song Suggestion

How Deep The Father's Love For
Us



Communion

As we gather today we come to share in this act of Communion together, remembering the love and sacrifice that Jesus made for us on the Cross. We remember the price that he paid for our sins and for our forgiveness. We gather together here in Church as the body of Christ in order to share the bread and the cup together. We come in faith, conscious of our weakness, seeking to renounce our sin, humbly putting our trust in Christ, and seeking his grace, as we look forward to the day when he will come again.

A prayer of Thanksgiving:

Heavenly Father, we offer you this day our praise and thanksgiving; we thank you for raising Jesus to life again and exalting him so that we might call him 'Lord', as we offer our faithfulness to him and seek to share in his ways. Loving Lord, we thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit, powerfully present in your people and your world, for the fellowship of your church, and for all the means of grace and the hope of glory. Living God, fill us with your Spirit, that as we share this bread and this cup we may feed on the body and blood of Christ, and be empowered for service in your world. Heavenly Father, accept our prayers and thanksgiving in the name of Jesus, the light of the world and the life of your people.

Our normal practice is to say these words:

For I received from the Lord what I also pass on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In

the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11 v. 22 – 26

After all have received the bread and the cup and after a period of silence, we end with these words in a Prayer of Thanksgiving for the blessings received at the Table:

Leader: Your death, O Lord, we commemorate. Your resurrection we celebrate. Your final coming we await. May the glory be to you, O Lord

Response: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. Loving Gracious God, we praise you for what you have given and for what you have promised us here. You have made us one with all who know you as Lord and Saviour. You have fed us with the bread of life and renewed us for your service. Now we give ourselves to you and we ask that our daily living may be part of the life of your eternal kingdom, and that our love may be your love in the world where we find ourselves., through Jesus Christ our Lord, we pray these things.

Amen

Church Together Thought

Begin by explaining that, in the time of Jesus, there were two groups of people who were totally opposed to each other - Jews and Gentiles. How difficult it must have been to live in peace with your neighbours in those days if they came from a different group. Jesus sought to bring peace between humans and God. His life, death and resurrection meant that anyone of any kind could become a friend of God, and that included both Jews and Gentiles.

JESUS' LOVE

God's plan was not just that different kinds of people should have a new friendship with him, but also that they should have a new friendship with each other. Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus explaining how much he hoped that Jews and Gentiles would change their ways and join completely together, because God longs for all people everywhere to be brought together in him.

Ephesians 3 v. 6 tells us: 'This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus'. Paul's hope was that all through earth and heaven, the love of the church would be seen, and that because of it everyone would become aware of how glorious God is.

IT'S ABOUT THE WOW MOMENTS

Go on to say that the church has been through good times and bad times as it has grown since the time that Paul wrote to the Ephesian church. The world which Paul longed for, in which all Jews and Gentiles were united in the love of Jesus, has not come about. And there have been other divisions within the church too, which must grieve God greatly. But he still longs for it to be a place where people of many different kinds come together, learn to love each other and to worship him.

DIFFERENT GROUPS MAKE UP THE CHURCH

There are many contrasting groups of people from today's society in the branches of the church. You might include: 'young' and 'elderly', 'men' and 'women', 'rich' and 'poor'. There are different denominations, ethnic groups, and classes of society. God wants these groups to come together for his

glory just as much as he planned for the miracle of Jews and Gentiles being brought together in Paul's day.

Have you ever wondered how is this going to happen? Maybe, the answer is that it is going to require a love and a strength and an understanding far beyond what is humanly possible. But don't forget - in the Lord God all those things are available and possible!

We read in **Ephesians 3 v. 20, 21**: 'Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen'. We should be praying, just as Paul did, for the width and length and height and depth of Jesus' love to become so real to us that we want to make it happen. Then people will look at the church and go '**Wow!**' all over again and maybe then they would want to worship our marvellous God.

Prayers Of Intercession

Lord accept our lives just as we are, with all our faults and failings, but also with our talents and our strengths and use us for your service to proclaim the Good News of Jesus wherever we find ourselves. We thank you Lord for all the many gifts and talents that we have received from you. Help us we pray in the mission of your church here at Salendine Nook, may we not be afraid to share the wonderful message of your salvation with all those we meet.

Loving Lord, we also pray for the many varied churches here in Huddersfield and the surrounding areas. We pray that we may work together more closely to use the different skills that each church has in order that your Kingdom may be seen to grow here in this part of Yorkshire. Guide us Lord, and help us to see your vision. Help us to build on all that you have given us down through many years and past generations and guide us so that we may move forward in your name. Help us to connect with the wider community of Salendine Nook and may we be positive in all that we seek to do in your name. Encourage us when the going seem to be hard and tough, help us to be positive in the mission that you have called us too, so that your name may be glorified. Heavenly Father, we are mindful that there are many places and situations within our world that need our prayers at this time, we especially remember these

places and people in the quietness of our hearts. Bring them peace and strength and help us through our prayers to pray for them and to offer our support in any way that we can.

We also pray this day for all those who work in the communities where we live, who seek to keep us safe. We remember in prayer, the emergency services, doctors and nurses. For voluntary services and for all who work in whatever way to bring relief, support, care and comfort to those who need it.

Help us dear Lord, to be a people who are outward looking. Help us to see your plan for our future, both here in this church and in our own lives. Encourage us to grow in love for you and for each other as we strive to worship you in new ways; help us to see ourselves as the family of God in this place. May our enthusiasm never wain, but give us a deep sense of your presence among us, we pray.

Finally Lord, we give thanks for our families and our friends. We thank you Lord for those times of relaxation and fun that we can have with those who love us and care for us. Help us dear Lord, to have those times when we can build up good solid relationships with those close to us, in order that we might be strengthened and that we may be a blessing to others as well.

All of these prayers we ask in your precious name.

Amen

Song Suggestion

The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not
Want



Responding To God In Prayer

From All Our Days, Irene Taylor and Phyllis Garlick, Church
Missionary Society, reproduced with permission:

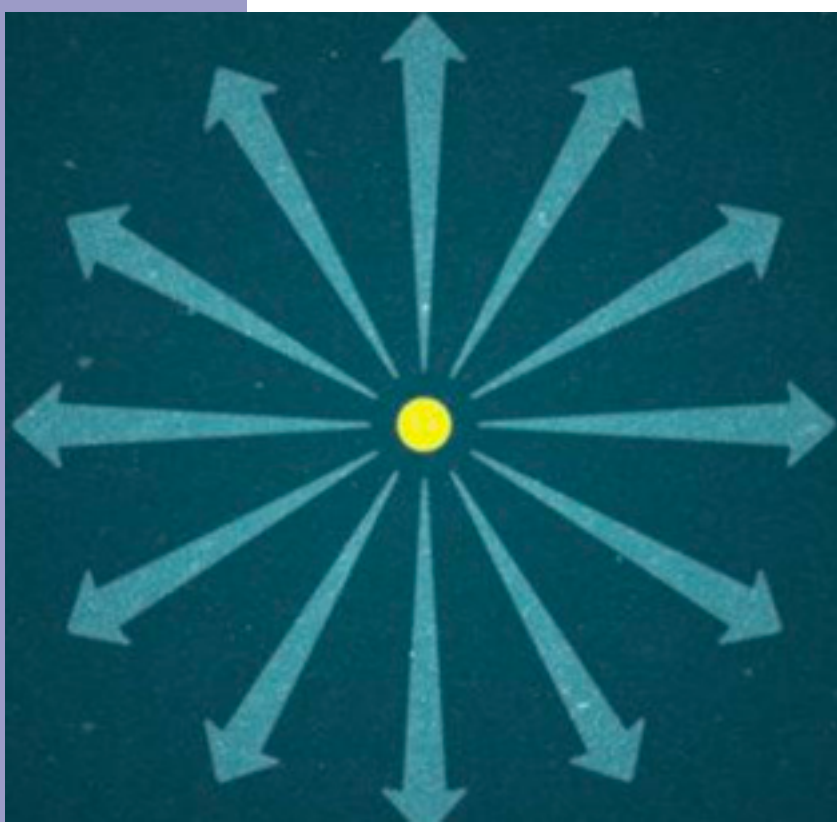
Lord of the loving heart, may mine be loving too;

Lord of the gentle hands, may mine be gentle too;

Lord of the willing feet, may mine be willing too;

So may I grow more like you in all I say or do.

Amen.



To me, though I am
the **very least of all**
the saints, this grace
was given, to preach
to the Gentiles
the unsearchable
riches of Christ

EPHESIANS 3:8

Song Suggestion

King of Kings, Majesty



Blessing

Lord, let us go from here in peace,
May your Word be fulfilled with us.
May your blessing be ever with us,
As we seek to be your witnesses in the
world.

May your grace, love and fellowship,
Be with us until we meet again.

Amen