

# Sunday August 1st, 2021

## Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

### Welcome & Prayer

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall never perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

Let us pray...

Heavenly Father, we come before you in humble adoration. You have loved us with an everlasting love. In your Son, Jesus Christ, we see divine love wrapped in flesh. On the cross we see arms stretched out welcoming sinners into salvation. In our hearts you have poured out your love by the Holy Spirit given to us. Forgive us for being so unloving towards you and one another. Help us grow in love for you and your world today. In Christ's name, Amen.

### Song – [How Deep the Father's Love for Us](#)

*Click the YouTube link and sing!*

### Bible Reading – 1 John 4:7-21 (NIV)

**7** Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. **8** Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. **9** This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. **10** This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. **11** Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **12** No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

**13** This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. **14** And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. **15** If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. **16** And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. **17** This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. **18** There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

**19** We love because he first loved us. **20** Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. **21** And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

### Announcements

**Focus for August - Outreach.** As disciples we have a mission: witnessing about Christ to our world. We have a new book to try and help us with sharing the message of Jesus in a changing world. The book is *Stay Salty* by Rebecca Manley Pippert. You can buy a copy on Sunday in the front foyer for \$20.

**QR Codes.** Thank you for all those who are using their QR codes to sign in. It really helps us confirm to the NSW government regulations. If you can't sign in by yourself, please speak to the people on the door about how we can help you out in the future.

**Family of Origin.** Anna Moss, the Women's Ministry Co-ordinator will be presenting for us on family systems therapy **TODAY** via ZOOM from 3-4:30pm. This time together will be a great way to see how our family of origin affects our thinking and our decision making. If you are interested in joining us our Facebook page will have the link or you could get it directly from Jo Barlow.

**Prayer on Zoom-** our monthly prayer meeting is on tomorrow (Monday August 2nd) night at 7:30pm. The link will be posted on our church Facebook group before the meeting. Please talk to Jon if you have any questions.

**Sick Leave** – Stephen had an ACL reconstruction on Thursday @ Belmont Hospital. He will be on sick leave for at least the next week. Please contact Jon or one of the elders if you need any pastoral assistance.

**Hunter Men's Convention.** Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> September 8:30-3pm @ Grace Evangelical Church. Speaker: Simon Manchester. Topic Ezekiel (is God trying to say something to us) Cost \$30. The capacity is only 104 this year because of COVID restrictions so if you would like to come you will need to get in fast!

**Invitation Service.** On 29th August we are planning to have a series of invitation services, where we can invite our unsaved friends and family along. Why not pick a person and start praying for them now? Why not ask the Lord to open their heart to respond to the gospel in faith and repentance?

**Kids spot:** Kids spot: This week we are learning from Revelation 2:8-13 and 3:7-12 where we will learn about the difficult topics of persecution, patience and perseverance. The kids will be encouraged to tell others about Jesus and to never stop – even if bad things happen to them as a result. We will also be praying for people we may know like missionaries who may be suffering for telling people about Jesus. Each child will make some praying hands to pray for someone this week who is suffering for their love of Jesus. Challenge for the week: set aside time as a family to pray each day for the family on the praying hands card and write a letter to them this week to let them know you are praying for them.

**Snow gums memory verse** challenge for the week: We will all die once, and then face judgement. Hebrews 9:27

## Song – [Grace Awaiting Me](#)

*Click the YouTube link and sing along!*

## Prayer Points for 1st August 2021

**A Prayer based on Psalm 109:** “But you, O Sovereign Lord, deal with me for your Name’s sake; because your steadfast love is good, deliver me!” (Ps. 109:21). After complaining to God about his circumstances, the psalmist makes his appeal for deliverance based on God’s mercy alone. This teaches us that God can never be made our debtor. We must cast off all of our own (apparent) righteousness and make our appeal based on Christ’s merits alone.

**Pray for families and singles during lockdown.** Pray for protection for families from domestic violence. Pray for parents in NSW and Victoria who are again having to home-school. Pray for people living alone to come into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

**Pray for Online Services.** The work of the Gospel goes on. Although many churches and Christians around Australia are in lockdown, the word of God cannot be chained (2 Tim. 2:9). Pray the word would successfully go out and the lost would be saved.

**Pray for COVID-19 outbreak.** Pray that God would continue to protect us from the worst of the pandemic. Pray for national unity, that all the states and territories may work together in the best interest of all Australians.

## Ministry Matters – Community Garden (Stuart Blanch)

### Bible Reading – 1 John 5:1-5 (NIV)

5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. 2 This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. 3 In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, 4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world,

even our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

## Sermon – How to Love Effectively (David Wigney)

In my last sermon I finished on a bit of a cliff hanger. We looked at the first 12 verses of proverbs chapter 12 and I said that in order to see suffering instead of being something to be avoided at all costs but rather as discipline, training and teaching and something that can bring about the ultimate good requires something the bible and proverbs in particular describes as wisdom. Ironically it was the suffering of Stephen due to his knee surgery which meant I didn't have time to finish my sermon on wisdom. So I decided to use a talk I gave many years at Night Church which has a number of links to the concept of wisdom, in particular the inherent wisdom of obedience.

The other thing I should tell you about this sermon is that it was originally the second part of a double act. The first part focused on 1 John chapter 4 verses 7-21. If you have your bibles open at 1 John chapter 4 allow me to summarize. Three questions were posed and then answered using 1 John chapter 4 verses 7-21. The first question posed was what is love? And the answer? God is love, that is, love is the very essence of God. The second question posed was how do we know that God loves us? The evidence of God's love for us is Jesus. 1 John 4:9 says: "this is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son in to the world" ... and later in verse 10 "...as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." The final question posed was how should we respond to God's love? And the answer - by loving other people. This is to say that love of God and our neighbour are inseparable - so much so that John says in verse 20 that anyone who says I love God yet hates his brother, he is a liar. And 1 John chapter 4 makes it clear that loving other people is not just a warm fuzzy "I love you man" type feeling. We are to love other people as Christ loved us - self sacrificially and strongly desiring the good for the other person even if that person is our enemy.

But here we come to a further question. What 1 John chapter 4 shows us is how important it is for us to develop within us a character or personality traits that are loving. A loving character that is motivated to actively desire good for another person even at great personal cost. But is this enough? Let me give an analogy to illustrate why this is might be a good question.

### Slide 2

Let's consider an example of romantic love. Imagine you are a young man who has instantly fallen in love with the most wonderful young woman you have ever met. She is beautiful, smart, godly, laughs at your jokes and against all probability seems to love you. So naturally you want to express your love to this woman, so you go out and buy her a gigantic \$100 bunch of long stem roses. Sadly, however, she has a severe pollen allergy and when you present her with the flowers you almost put her in hospital.

### Slide 3

You then decide to cook her a meal spending an absolute fortune on \$50 a kilogram Wagyu steak only to discover that she is a vegetarian.

### Slide 4

Finally, you decide to pull out all the stops and give her as a present your entire collection of mint condition original Batman comics from the 1970s. However, once again she is strangely unimpressed by your attempts to demonstrate love. No one is questioning that you have the motive to love but your love is somehow not effective. What has gone wrong? In a nutshell your love is uninformed. To be effective, the desire to love needs to be informed. Love needs to be molded, shaped and directed by knowledge if it is going to be effective love. In the example I have mentioned love needs to be shaped by the knowledge that

the young woman in question is highly allergic to pollen, is a vegetarian and weird as this may seem really doesn't care much for batman comics.

#### Slide 5

And so I sometimes wonder whether this isn't the crux of the problem in the reputation Christians often have of being meddling do gooders, all fired up with admirable zeal to show self sacrificial towards both God and neighbour but largely clueless in how to make their love effective. So how do we make our love effective? I'd like to suggest that we can observe three things about effective love from 1 John 5 verses 1 to 5.

Firstly it starts and ends with faith in Jesus. If you put together the first part of verse 1 and the last part of verse 5 we can clearly see that true Christians believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Now I know that a lot of people these days talk about head knowledge and heart knowledge. But this is to make a distinction that the bible doesn't make. We are to love God and our neighbour with our whole being. Remember how Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. Note also in 5:1 that belief in Jesus means that you are born of God just as much as in 4:7 where it says that everyone who loves is born of God.

But what does belief in Jesus mean? Surely there is something more to being a Christian than just believing that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God? And if by that you mean surely there is something more than just intellectual assent to the proposition Jesus is the Christ the Son of God then yes you are right. But I should also point out that being a Christian is not less than this either. Let's not fall into the trap where we think that love is all that matters and beliefs are unimportant. Faith and love are inseparable. And our beliefs about Jesus are foundational to our Christian faith. If, for example, I have the belief that Jesus was just a great moral teacher then I cannot be a Christian and I cannot love either God or my neighbour effectively. If Jesus was just a great moral teacher then I will not consider the gospel of Jesus death and resurrection to save people from their sins as a crucial part of loving my neighbour. If Jesus was just a great moral teacher then I will consider that my neighbour's or for that matter the world in general's greatest need is not to be reconciled to God, but to have a higher standard of living, or a cleaner environment, or a better education system. Now please don't get me wrong these are all important things and may in fact be an important part of expressing our love to God and our neighbour. But belief that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God will inform our love for God and neighbour so that these things don't become ends in themselves.

#### Slide 6

OK got it you might say - I have to believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God - check! Now can I get back to being loving? Is that all the head knowledge I need to love God and my neighbour effectively? Of course not! If I have knowledge that my wife was born in New Zealand and is 5 foot 2 then this will be helpful in expressing my love to her in that I won't buy her a Wallabies jersey for her birthday in size extra extra extra large. In a loving relationship with another person we can never get to the point where we say yes I think I now know enough about this person I don't need to know any more. How much more is this the case in a loving relationship with God? Can we ever get to the point where we feel we know enough about God and Jesus His Son? I mean let's just pause and look at the statement Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. It's only eight words but they are packed with meaning. For example, what does the name Jesus actually mean? Why was he given this name and not some other name? What does the word Christ mean and why is it significant? And how can Jesus be the Son of God? There are of course answers to these questions but to answer them with any depth of meaning we need to draw on more than just a few key memory verses.

#### Slide 7

Graham Goldsworthy points out in his book *Gospel and Kingdom* that the whole bible can be described as Christocentric. That is, all parts of the bible either foreshadow, point forward to, explain the need for or describe the work of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Hence the whole bible can be considered our means of learning more and more about Jesus. But isn't that a bit extreme? I mean come on have you seen the bible? It's really thick and it's got a lot of pages. Can't we just stick to the important bits? I'll just make two comments here. Firstly if God is the creator of the entire Universe then wouldn't you expect Him to be at least a little complex? Isn't it amazing that God has been gracious enough to say to us that all we really need to know about Him is contained in just one book. Secondly, in any relationship how can I say that a certain piece of knowledge about a person is not something I need to know. If my wife tells me she doesn't like Vegemite then can I really say – look do I really have to remember that? Do I really have to know that about you? I do if I'm going to get her a breakfast in bed that she doesn't throw straight back at me!

#### Slide 8

Alright David you've convinced me. I'm going to spend the rest of my life learning more and more about Jesus. But knowledge by itself is meaningless if it doesn't lead to action. Hence in verses 2 and 3 we read: This is how we know that we love the children of God, by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands.

Here is the sequence of events. First our eyes are opened when we come to the knowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that he died on the cross and rose to life on the third day to save us from our sins and to restore us to a right relationship with God. In response to this knowledge we are filled with a desire to please God and to live our lives according to His will and not our own. This love will express itself in an insatiable desire to learn more about the God who has saved us. But as we do so, we come to a greater understanding that Jesus is not only a savior to be loved and worshipped, He is a Lord to be obeyed. As a Lord to be obeyed he has left us with certain commandments which will inform and shape the way we both love God and our neighbour.

#### Slide 9

Let me give two brief examples. I may be filled with love for God and a desire to express this love. Therefore, in what seems to me an expression of that love I spend all my money to make a 50 foot statue of God and then bow down and worship the statue all as an expression of my great love for God. But Exodus chapter 20 clearly says you shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in the heaven above or the earth below. You shall not bow down to worship them. Sincerity is not the issue here. Expressing love in ways that are contrary to God's word actually makes Him angry and will drive us not closer but further away from God.

#### Slide 10

Another example is expressing love towards my children. I may sincerely believe that giving my children whatever they want whenever they want it is the way to show them love. But this is misguided love. This is love that will not be effective. As I read the bible carefully I come to the understanding that God has commanded me at times to rebuke and discipline my children and sometimes that may even involve corporal punishment. Have a look at Proverbs chapter 23. This is effective love in that it will help my children grow up, not to be spoiled self centered brats, but godly Disciples of Christ.

#### Slide 11

But before I go on to my next point could I just suggest that obeying Jesus is so much more than treating the bible as a gigantic rule book. You will not find specific commands that will help you to love effectively in every area of life. But to think like this is to put too narrow a meaning on the word obey. The word obey in Hebrew and then later in Greek carries the meaning of paying attention to or listening under authority. When we read the bible we are not just looking for specific rules to obey but we are trying to con-

struct a world view. A world view where we learn to think God's thoughts after Him that in turn will shape how we express our love to both God and neighbour. If one of my children hops through the house wearing muddy soccer boots, I will be annoyed. If they say "but you didn't tell us the rule don't hop through the house in muddy soccer boots" I will be even more annoyed. Why is that? I shouldn't need to give a specific command. If my children had bothered to understand the world view grime and mud in the house are bad things then they should have been able to extract a command from the world view.

#### Slide 12

But does all of this sound too hard? Well yes it would be if all we had was our own resources. However, the 2nd half of verse 3 goes on to add and his commands are not burdensome. Why aren't they burdensome? Verse 4 goes on to give us the answer. For everyone born of God – that is everyone who loves God and his neighbour as seen in 4:7 and expresses that love through faith in and obedience to Jesus Christ as shown in 5:1 – everyone who is born of God overcomes the world. This is a great encouragement. Sometimes it seems that the command to love God and neighbour as modeled to us by Jesus is just impossible. The idea of loving self sacrificially informed by careful study and application of the commands of Jesus seems so bizarrely different to the culture I live in that I can be sometimes tempted just to pack it all in.

But here's the exciting news – it really works, so much so that those who are born of God are described as overcoming the world. The world in this context is the values and systems in our society that are opposed to the things of God. When we are born of God, we overcome the world in two ways. Firstly, slowly but surely, we start to have victory over sin in our lives. This is expressed in chapter 3 verse 9 where it says no one who is born of God will continue to sin because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning because he has been born of God. This doesn't mean that we will never sin but that sin will become the exception rather than the rule in a life that is increasingly characterized by effective love for God and neighbour.

But I think overcoming the world speaks even more broadly than overcoming sin in our lives. As we love God and neighbour in ways informed by careful study of the bible, we will inevitably create communities that will model God's love to the whole world. These communities will be light to a dark world in that they will show the world the way God has always wanted us to live and in so doing they will display to the world the very essence of God. But Jesus also told us that true disciples will be light and salt to the world. Salt was a way of preserving meat and stopping it from going off. When someone saw a hunk of meat going off they didn't curse the meat. They would curse the people who didn't put salt into it. In the same way when we see our world decaying around us we shouldn't blame the world, after all that's the natural course for societies that have rejected God. Rather we should ask ourselves where are the Christians and what are they doing to preserve our society from decay. Although it's unfashionable to say so, I believe that genuine bible believing evangelical Christianity has been the greatest force for good in the last 2000 years. Just ask yourself which countries have the most robust democracies, the least corruption and the best human rights records. They are mostly countries that have had the most exposure to reformed evangelical Christianity. For inspiration have a look at the movie *Amazing Grace* about William Wilberforce a committed evangelical Christian and his attempts to abolish the slave trade in 19th century England. Here was a man whose belief that Jesus is the Son of God led him to truly overcome the world through the effective loving of both God and neighbour.

But greater still, overcoming the world looks forward to a time when Christian communities will be more than a glimpse and foretaste of heaven. In the concluding remarks of chapter 5 John gives us a final encouragement to spur us on to love effectively when he writes in 5:13

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

True love, effective love, Christ centred love doesn't just get us in to heaven, it is what heaven will be all about - perfect loving relationships between God and His people where we finally will be able to love God with all of our hearts souls and minds and our neighbour as ourselves.

Let's pray. Thank you that you have shown us what love is by sending Your Son Jesus to restore us to a right relationship with you. We pray that you will enable us to respond to that love with love that is informed by reading your word and obeying your commands. Enable us to grow in wisdom so that we will be able to apply your word to all areas of our lives so that we will love you and our neighbour effectively. And we pray all these things in the name of Jesus our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

## **Song – [Live for the Kingdom](#)**

*Click the YouTube link and sing along!*

## **Benediction**

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. **11** Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

## **Morning Tea**

There is no physical morning tea allowed at the moment but why not give someone a call instead? Who might your ring now?