

## Thought for the Day Monday August 3<sup>rd</sup>

*3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. Philippians 2 verses 3-4*

I like reading. Perhaps you like a good book, or do you prefer a film. Something I read the other day, about the word "prefer", used it in a way that made me think.

It was about soldiers in special units in Kosovo after the brutal war. They were tasked with rounding up some of the leaders of the army who had been involved in war crimes. Some of these people were embedded in their communities. The teams had to move very quickly and work very much together as a team in order to quickly secure buildings at 2 or 3 different locations at the same time. The person writing about these teams used the word "prefer", which basically means to put the safety of the rest of the team above you. To prefer the other person and put them first.

Paul talks in the reading about putting others before ourselves. Jesus the perfecter of our faith gave everything for us. Being a follower of Christ is about "self-sacrifice" giving something up for others.

I talked a few weeks back about the "Black lives Matter" movement and I even attended an online Zoom meeting about our relationship with people of colour, I spoke about how things need to really change in our world and felt it was a watershed moment. I now get the feeling that it's moving onto the back burner, mainly through quite a backlash in the press and media, a general unease about raising it especially in the UK.

Another book I am reading at the moment is called "White Fragility" why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism. And it has really caused me to think and question even my own motives.

The premise of the book is that those of us who are white, live white privileged lives, we do, even though we don't always realise it, we set that as the benchmark and judge all other standards by it. It's called, and this is painful to our ears "White Supremacy". We don't like to think of ourselves in this way and generally think of it as a racist term.

So any conversation that leads this way we shut it down, because it makes us feel uncomfortable, and yet, it is a fact that we in so many ways, we do live privileged lives, lives which can be so inaccessible to people of colour. Another thought is that we can look upon people of colour as though they need to aim to be like us, and if we are not very careful we can feel sorry for them because they are not like us. That's why we can't talk about it; we feel that we are just widening the gap.

We need to have conversations about race in order to understand. I remember one of the comments I saw when the photograph of me taking the knee for "Black Lives Matter" was "I don't take the knee for anybody, only the Queen". You could put it another way and say people I don't respect. If you think of others more highly than yourselves as our reading says, by taking the knee you are showing them or their cause respect, just as it can be to wash someone's feet. Not because you feel sorry for them or pity them. But you respect them as Children of God. Do you see what I am driving at?

I belong to a generation which saw women as less than men. In fact in my day the wedding vows said by the woman were, to love honour and obey. I can remember saying to Jen, something which used to drive her mad, without even thinking, when she made a statement, I would say "are you sure?" This comes from thinking I perhaps know better, and who can remember "don't worry your pretty little head". These things happened they really did. But we know better now, and I think as painful as it may be, we need these conversations about race in order to understand and for things to change for the better.

Our churches are no different from the world in having issues about hierarchy, who's more important etc. but you know in order to share the good news of Gods kingdom with a broken hurting world we need to, as Paul writes in Romans 12 verse 10 "Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves". That's Irrespective of colour, creed, gender or anything else.

Lockdown has revealed to us the things which we need to hold close in our church fellowships and those we need to let go of. As we wrestle with the shape and future of our church and all things related to it, Paul reminds us one thing we need to hold close, through everything is our devotion for each other.

The words we say together in our communion service remind us as the bread is broken. "Though we are many, we are one body, because we all share in one bread".

**Jen will now lead us in prayer:**

I am using a prayer by Susan Sayers

**"Lets us Pray"**

God is close to us as we pray.

He is attentive to us now.

Lord, whenever you weep over our harshness,  
make your tears melt our hearts of stone.  
Whenever you grieve over our double standards,  
shock us into honesty again.  
Make us receptive to your teaching,  
willing to take your risks  
and eager to run with our eyes fixed on Jesus.

*Silence*

Lead us, Lord:

**to walk in your ways.**

Whenever the news overwhelms us,  
nudge us to fervent prayer.  
Wherevers leaders meet to negotiate peace,  
be present at the conference table.  
Breathe your values into our thinking,  
tear down the divisive barriers  
and renew us to lead the world into loving.

*Silence*

Lead us, Lord:  
**to walk in your ways.**

Whenever tempers are frayed and patience is wearing thin,  
give us space to collect ourselves and try again.  
Whenever the demands of family and friends  
remind us of our limitations,  
minister graciously through our weakness  
and teach us the humility of apologising.

*Silence*

Lead us, Lord:  
**to walk in your ways.**

Whenever people are enveloped by pain  
or desolate grief or total exhaustion,  
bring refreshment and peace, tranquillity and hope.  
Wherever the grip of the past  
prevents free movement into the future,  
bring release and healing.

*Silence*

Lead us, Lord:  
**to walk in your ways.**

Holy God, we love the beauty and goodness  
of your nature, and thank you for the gift of your spirit  
to guide us to walk in your ways.

Merciful Father:  
**accept these prayers  
for the sake of your son,  
our saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen**

[https://youtu.be/W3Pb77ylz\\_Q](https://youtu.be/W3Pb77ylz_Q)

"Let us build a house where all can live"  
Singing the faith 409  
Let us build a house where love can dwell

and all can safely live,  
a place where saints and children tell  
how hearts learn to forgive.  
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,  
rock of faith and vault of grace;  
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:  
*All are welcome, all are welcome,  
all are welcome in this place.*

Let us build a house where prophets speak,  
and words are strong and true,  
where all God's children dare to seek  
to dream God's reign anew.  
Here the cross shall stand as witness  
and as symbol of God's grace;  
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:

Let us build a house where love is found  
in water, wine and wheat:  
a banquet hall on holy ground  
where peace and justice meet.  
Here the love of God, through Jesus,  
is revealed in time and space;  
as we share in Christ the feast that frees  
us:

Let us build a house where hands will reach  
beyond the wood and stone  
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,  
and live the Word they've known.  
Here the outcast and the stranger  
bear the image of God's face;  
let us bring an end to fear and danger:

Let us build a house where all are named,  
their songs and visions heard  
and loved and treasured, taught and  
claimed  
as words within the Word.  
Built of tears and cries and laughter,  
prayers of faith and songs of grace,  
let this house proclaim from floor to  
rafter:

*(CCL Licence No.16660)*