

**Abbey International Baptist Church, Reading
Worship Service with Baptism and Communion**

10:30AM 20th October 2024

Selina Chan leading & Rev Dr Julia Binney Preaching

www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk

Find us on Facebook @Abbey Baptist Church, Reading



THEME: The Cost of Entering The Kingdom of God

'And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell' (Mark 9:47).

CALL TO WORSHIP:

Come, all who seek the Kingdom of God. The path to this Kingdom is not always easy, it calls for our hearts, our lives and our devotion.

Lord, we come, aware of the cost. We desire to follow You wherever You lead us.

Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let them deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me."

We come. Teach us, Lord, to sacrifice and surrender for the sake of Your Kingdom.

Though the cost is huge, Christ has promised us eternal life, true joy and a place in His Kingdom.

With grateful hearts, we enter into worship, ready to offer our all to You.

Come, let us worship the Lord, who calls us to follow Him, even at great cost, but with great reward.

We worship You, O Lord, with all that we have and all that we are. Amen.

HYMN BP&W 352:

O Jesus, I have promised
To serve you to the end;
Be now and ever near me,
My Master and my Friend;
I shall not fear the battle
If you are by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway
If You will be my Guide.

O let me feel you near me;
The world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle,
The tempting sounds I hear;
My foes are ever near me,
Around me and within;
But Jesus, draw still nearer,
And shield my soul from sin.

O let me hear you speaking
In accents clear and still,
Above the storms of passion,
The murmurs of self-will;
O speak to reassure me,
To hasten, or control;
O speak, and make me listen.
O Guardian of my soul.

O Jesus, you have promised
To all who follow you,
That where You are in glory
Your servant shall be too;
And, Jesus, I have promised
To serve You to the end;
O give me grace to follow
My Master and My Friend.

O let me see Your footmarks,
And in them plant my own;
My hope to follow truly
Is in Your strength alone.
O guide me, call me, draw me,
Uphold me to the end;
And then in heaven receive me,
My Saviour and my Friend!
J.E. Bode (1816-74)

A PRAYER OF PRAISE:

We thank You Lord, for in Christ, You gave us all –
So that we might enter into Your Kingdom.
Though the road is narrow, You walk with us every step of the way.
With grateful hearts, we exalt Your holy name.
May our lives reflect the greatness of Your Kingdom
and the wonder of Your love. Amen.

A PRAYER OF CONFESSION:

Forgive us, Lord. We confess that we have been afraid to take up our cross,
afraid to face rejection, suffering or loss for Your sake.
We confess that we have been tempted to follow You only when it is convenient,
And we have turned away when the path grew difficult.
In Your mercy, please cleanse us of our selfishness and renew us,
teach us to follow You with our whole hearts, no matter the cost.
We lay down our sins, our pride, and our fears at Your feet. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: YOU ARE INVITED TO PRAY IN YOUR OWN LANGUAGE

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name,
Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins,
As we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are Yours
Now and for ever and ever. Amen.

An offering will be taken during the following song...If you would prefer to contribute electronically, please either use the card machine at the entrance of the sanctuary or scan the QR code on this sheet.

Praise Song https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRZC0hy9U8k&list=RDIRZC0hy9U8k&start_radio=1

What a friend we have in Jesus
All our sins and griefs to bear
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer
Oh what peace we often forfeit
Oh what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer

Have we trials and temptations
Is there trouble anywhere
Jesus Saviour is our refuge
Take it to the Lord in prayer
Are we weak and heavy laden
Cumbered with a load of care
Jesus knows our every weakness
Take it to the Lord in prayer

*Oh what a friend
Oh what a friend in Jesus*

Blessed Savior you have promised
All our burdens you will bear
May we ever Lord be bringing
All to you in earnest prayer
Soon in glory bright unclouded
Face to face will be our prayer
Joyful praise and endless worship
Will be our sweet portion there

*Oh what a friend
Oh what a friend in Jesus*

The Sing Team Kids – Gospel Song Records

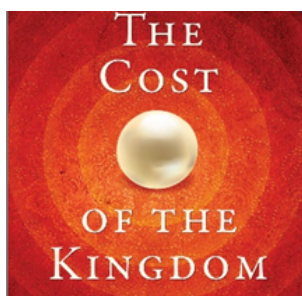
The children and young people will now leave for their own dedicated groups.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

GOSPEL READING: Mark 9:42-49 (NLT)

NEW TESTAMENT READING: Philippians 3:7-11

SERMON: The Cost of Entering the Kingdom of God (Mark 9:47)



Today we continue with our series on **The Kingdom of God**, looking at Mark's interpretation of Jesus' new order. As we have already seen throughout this series, the Kingdom of God is the central theme of Jesus' teaching and ministry. For Mark the Kingdom (or reign) of God is not some vague, airy-fairy concept awaiting us sometime in the distant future but something of the here and now, to be lived out practically, earthed and grounded in ordinary everyday life.

The theme for this week is 'The Cost of Entering the Kingdom.' Our calling to live out the truths values and priorities of God's kingdom is based on the laid out

design in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 – 7). As God's church we are called to model the reality of God's kingdom for the world, but this is not an easy, comfortable calling and can be costly for us. Tertullian (a 2nd century theologian) wrote of a saying of Jesus which was spoken on the way to Gethsemane: 'No-one can gain the kingdom of God who has not passed through temptation.' Jesus often warned against those who light-heartedly proposed to follow him and encouraged us all to count the cost of our discipleship. Another early church saying is from Origen, a 3rd century Christian scholar from Egypt who has Jesus say, 'He that is near me is near the fire, and he that is far from me is far from the kingdom.' For all of us who propose to follow Jesus – what are we thinking? Have we really thought deeply about what we are doing? To be near me is to be near fire: 'I have come to bring fire on the earth' (Luke 12:49)! This is the fire of tribulation and suffering.

In Mark 9:43-47 Jesus graphically illustrates this: 'if your hand or your foot gets in God's way, chop it off and throw it away. You're better off maimed or lame and alive than the proud owner of two hands and two feet, godless in a furnace of eternal fire. And if your eye distracts you from God, pull it out and throw it away. It is better to enter the kingdom of God one eyed and alive than exercising your 2020 vision from inside the fire of hell' (The Message). What Jesus is highlighting here is the cost of entering his kingdom.

1. The Cost of Following Jesus

If we wish to be saved, to have freedom and forgiveness from our sin, peace and purpose in life, to go to heaven, a relationship with our loving merciful God now and forever, there is a cost. Committing our lives to Christ has consequences. Is it a price we are willing to pay? So what is this cost? The following list gives us some things to consider:

- i. For some following Jesus is exceedingly costly. There are those who have suffered persecution, isolation, family rejection, imprisonment, physical suffering, even literal death for following Jesus - truly the fire of tribulation and suffering.
- ii. For most of us the cost is not so much in physical pain and suffering. It is more about us no longer being the centre of our lives because Jesus must be the centre, the focus. As John the Baptist put it, he must increase and we must decrease (John 3:30). This is hard for us, painful and it feels like suffering because we are quite self-centred, self-absorbed creatures and we live in a world that feeds that in us. To step down from the throne of our lives and enthrone Christ at the centre feels like a sacrificial death.
- iii. This is because in God's kingdom we are no longer living for ourselves. Christianity has been described as a 'lived for others life.' This is costly for us.
- iv. We are to put the needs of others before our own, 'not looking to your own interests but looking to the interests of others' (Philippians 2:4). As Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, we are to love our enemies and do good to those who hurt us (Matthew 5:43-48). This can definitely feel costly but is part of Jesus' design for living in his kingdom and cannot be avoided or denied.
- v. What about the cost of not being in control? It is hard to hand over the reins of our lives to God. He has to be in the driving seat, not us! The popular Invictus poem by William Ernest Henley (1849-1903) has the line, '*I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.*' When Jesus is Lord, he is the master, he is the captain. This is especially costly for the control freaks among us!
- vi. Then there is the cost of moving out from where we feel comfortable, settled in our entrenched views and habitual patterns of behaviour. Whatever your views on spiritual warfare, traditionally it has been understood as the internal battle we all face between our flesh, that is our sinful nature and the Holy Spirit at work within us. This, I think you will agree, feels like a fierce battle at times, it really does.
- vii. The cost for us may be in the laying down of our pride in ourselves and our own ability and letting go of misplaced trust and embracing Christ, and of simply taking God at his word.
- viii. The cost may be in the necessary transference of allegiances, a breaking away from old loyalties, cultural norms and powerful emotional ties to turn to Christ.
- ix. The cost may be to re-focus our lives, to clarify our vision that has got blurred and cloudy by trying to find our identity outside of and other to Christ. A very successful businessperson had a sign on their desk in front of them saying, 'remember you are a Christian first.'

Jesus said, 'Those who would come after me must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me' (Mark 8:34). The cross symbolises sacrificial cost and suffering. Jesus is referring to death and self-denial. Are there bits of you that need to be lopped off, removed, pruned, destroyed, denied? Not literal hands or feet cut off or eyes plucked out but things in your life that are preventing you from fully entering the kingdom of God or fully responding to him or really going on with God? Things that you are hanging on to that God wants you to let go of? Are there costs that you are not really willing to pay? Steps that you need to take that feel like a sacrifice too far for you? Would you turn your back on Jesus

then like the rich young ruler did (Mark 10:17-27)? If so, you would be missing the kingdom of God, missing that which is most precious, most valuable compared to anything else on earth.

2. The Cost of Our Salvation

When we consider the cost to us, we must do so in the light of the cost to him – and it does not compare. Our communion with God, our peace, our purpose, our freedom, our deliverance, our rescue, our healing, our help, our comfort, our eternal salvation are all through Christ's suffering and death. He held nothing back, he gave his all for us because he loves us every single human being so much. Jesus paid the price for our salvation. All we have to do is receive but the salvation of the world cost Jesus his life. Paul wrote, 'In view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice to God' (Romans 12:1). In the light of God's infinite love and the cost of our salvation, we can do no other than offer our whole selves to him in return no matter what the perceived cost might be that is actually no cost at all by comparison.

What does following Jesus really cost us compared to the gain? What are we hanging on to compared to the rich, deep, fulfilling, purposeful, blessed life-imparting relationship that we can have with God in Christ? We are brought low, humbled, we do have to deny ourselves and there are personal costs to entering God's kingdom but only so we can be exalted: 'humble yourselves, under God's mighty hand, that he might lift you up in due time' (1 Peter 5:6). We do have to die to self, to sin, to our old way of life in order to live, to really live, as God intended: 'for me to live is Christ and to die is gain' (Philippians 1:21). As Paul made clear, 'whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ' (Philippians 3:8). We cannot out give God! We gain infinitely more when we surrender and let things go, when we do die to self and sin, to self-centred motivations and self-interest and let God take us and do with us what he wants. Nothing the world has to offer can compare with living for Jesus and in him, through him, living that 'lived for others life.' Isaac Watts' hymn *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*, closes with the line, 'Love so amazing so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.' We surely must substitute this with 'shall have my soul, my life, my all.'

TESTIMONIES & BAPTISMS: Benna Fung & Arezu Fatameh Sheykizad

HYMN MP25

All to Jesus I surrender,
All to Him I freely give,
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live.

*I surrender all, I surrender all.
All to Thee, my blessed Saviour, I surrender all.*

All to Jesus I surrender,
Humbly at His feet I bow,
Worldly pleasures all forsaken;
Take me, Jesus, take me now.

All to Jesus I surrender,
Make me, Saviour, wholly Thine;
Let me feel Thy Holy Spirit,
Thy know that Thou art mine.

All to Jesus I surrender,
Lord I give myself to Thee;
Fill me with Thy love and power,
Let Thy blessing fall on me.

All to Jesus I surrender,
Now I feel the sacred flame,

Oh, the joy of full salvation!

Glory, glory to His name!

Judson W. Van de Venter

HYMN BP&W 233

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God:
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down:
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all!
Issac Watts (1674-1748)

RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

COMMUNION

WORDS OF INVITATION:

Come now to this sacred table, for Christ is here, ready to meet your need.
Come with your sorrow and find joy, with your faults and find forgiveness,
with your regrets and find hope, with your fears and find strength.
Come, if life is dark and find light, if your heart is troubled and find peace,
if your spirit is hungry and find nourishment.
Come, just as you are, and meet with the one who welcomes you in love,
who waits to set you free and to bring you fullness of life.
Come, and receive all he longs to give you.

A PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

THE INSTITUTION:

The Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed took bread
And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said,
"This is my body that 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, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."
For whether you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." (1
Corinthians 11:23-26)

This is the body of Christ, broken for you.
(take a piece of bread and eat as it is served to you)

This is the blood of Christ, shed for you.
(we drink together once all have been served)

WORDS OF ACCLAMATION AND CELEBRATION:

The one who died is risen!

The one bowed down is lifted up!

The one nailed to a cross is enthroned on high!

The one who gave his all is Lord of all. Hallelujah!

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION: John Chilvers

The Bible says: "I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf and give thanks for them. Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity." (*1 Timothy 2:1-2 NLT*)

Father God, we pray for peace: Psalm 122:6 says: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May those who love you be secure." This principle applies to all cities and nations. The conflicts in Israel, Gaza and Lebanon are making the headlines now and we pray for peace with justice in those lands. We also bring before you the war in Ukraine and the conflict in Sudan where flooding has led to contaminated food and water and the outbreak of cholera. Lord, there is so much hatred, anger and suffering in these places.

Prince of Peace, in your mercy, bring peace, justice, healing and reconciliation.

Father God, we pray for our national leaders here in the United Kingdom, Iran, China and Hong Kong, and for all the other countries represented here in this room. Lord, raise up leaders in every nation who will lead with integrity and honour, and grant them wisdom and understanding. We pray for an end to corruption and injustice in governments.

Lord of Lords, King of Kings, in your power, bring your Kingdom here on earth.

Father God, we pray for the Church. Lord Jesus, strengthen believers within each nation to stand firm in their faith and to be a light in their communities. Protect those who are persecuted for their faith. Help us in this country where to be a Christian is relatively easy and we can become complacent. May we be always hungry and thirsty for you, Jesus, to be never satisfied with staying where we are in our spiritual journey.

Head of the Church, we are your body. May we be willing to go where you lead us as a church here at Abbey.

In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

HYMN MP 1282:

Hear the call of the kingdom,
Lift your eyes to the King;
Let His song rise within you
As a fragrant offering
Of how God, rich in mercy,
Came in Christ to redeem
All who trust in His unfailing grace.

Hear the call of the Kingdom
To be children of light
With the mercy of heaven.

The humility of Christ;
Walking justly before Him,
Loving all that is right,
That the life of Christ may shine through us.
King of Heaven we will answer the call.
We will follow, bringing hope to the world.
Filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim
Salvation in Jesus' name.

Hear the call of the Kingdom
To reach out to the lost
With the Father's compassion
In the wonder of the cross
Bringing peace and forgiveness
And a hope yet to come
Let the nations put their trust in Him.

Keith and Kristy Getty and Stuart Townsend copyright 2006 Thankyou Music/Capital CMG
Publishing/Integritymusic.com

THE BLESSING

Day by day, may the living Christ speak to you, grow in you,
work through you, shine from you and dwell within you.
And may the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, go with you today and always.
Amen.

THE GRACE

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore, Amen.

.....

Events to highlight:

Today:

- Fair Trade stall after the service

This week:

- Tuesday evening prayer open to all on Zoom. 8:00 – 8:30 pm (Meeting ID: 862 1518 8882 PW: 657161)
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86215188882?pwd=0Ln8HnRMbvmYrwCPJbsGDrE0TokDmB.1>
- Work day at church and at the Manse (where Jim and Julia live) – Saturday 26th October. Please see Simon if you are able to help

Dates for your diary:

- Sunday 27th October – Connect Group leaders meeting after the service
- Sunday 3rd November – Gift Sunday

If you would like to contribute financially to Abbey International Baptist Church electronically, please scan the QR code to pay:

QR Code for Offering

