

Abbey Baptist Church, Reading
Worship Service 10:30am 15th February 2026
Bridget Gurney leading and Zoltan Biro preaching
www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk
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Carrying the burdens of each other

Notices

Call to worship

MP 606 - Soften my heart

Soften my heart Lord
Soften my heart
From all indifference
Set me apart

To feel Your compassion
To weep with Your tears
Come soften my heart O Lord
Soften my heart
Graham Kendrick

MP 139 - Father, we adore you

Father, we adore You
Lay our lives before You
How we love You

Jesus, we adore You
Lay our lives before You
How we love You

Spirit, we adore You
Lay our lives before You
How we love You
Terrye Coelho

Prayer

Family time

Worshipping God with our offering

The offering will be taken during the singing of this song

BPW 484

Let there be love shared among us,
let there be love in our eyes,
may now your love sweep this nation,
cause us, O Lord, to arise.
Give us a fresh understanding
of brotherly love that is real,
let there be love shared among us,
let there be love.

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Children leave for their classes & Prayer

Bible Readings - Matthew 20: 20 -28 and Philipians 2: 1 -11

BPW 470

A new commandment I give unto you:
that you love one another as I have loved you,
that you love one another as I have loved you.

By this shall all know that you are my disciples,
if you have love one for another.
By this shall all know that you are my disciples,

if you have love one for another.

Anon / based on John 13: 3a / Untraced

Sermon: Carrying each other's burdens (Matthew 20:20-28; Philippians 2:1-11)

Over the past weeks we have considered holy habits that cultivate the life God has planted within us. The first four habits focused on inward habits, growth that happens inside us.

By reading the Bible, we allow the Word to shape our minds. Through prayer, we align our hearts with God's will. Fasting teaches us to loosen our grip on self-reliance. And through reflection and meditation, we absorb God's presence. Each of these habits nourishes the seed of spiritual life.

But as the seed develops and matures it doesn't only draw nourishment inward, it begins to bear fruit outward. Spiritual growth is not measured only by personal devotion but how our relationships are transformed. It is revealed in the way we carry one another.

The first of these outer habits is bearing the burdens of each other. During the family time, Bridget talked about plants that support each other, like Sweet Corn, Beans and Squash. As Christians we are called to live together and support each other, just like the plants do it.

Both of our texts talk about the main reasons why we struggle to show signs of such maturity: selfish ambition. And both tells us of Christ, who bore the greatest burden of all.

I. Two concepts of greatness: Growth vs Ambition

In Matthew 20 Jesus predicts his suffering and death, but things develop immediately after this. In verses 18–19, He speaks plainly of betrayal, condemnation, mockery, crucifixion, and resurrection. The shadow of the cross hangs over the conversation. But in verse 20, the mother of James and John approaches him with a request: that her sons might sit at Jesus' right and left in His kingdom.

The contrast is striking.

Jesus speaks of suffering; they speak of status. He speaks of sacrifice; they speak of seating arrangements. The request itself reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of His kingdom.

In verse 22, Jesus asks them this question: "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"

In the New Testament the "cup" often signifies suffering, judgment and rejection. Jesus is asking whether they are prepared to take part in the cost of His mission.

They answer confidently, "We can." Yet their confidence springs from ignorance. They want glory without grief, status without pain.

Jesus does not deny that they will share in suffering, but He makes clear that greatness in His kingdom is not distributed as political reward. It is not secured by ambition.

Verse 24 tells us that the other ten disciples became furious. Their reaction again is not born of humility. It is based on rivalry. They are troubled not because the request was inappropriate, but because it threatened their own aspirations.

Selfish ambition breeds division. It is incompatible with burden bearing. One cannot carry another while competing with him.

I know only one incident when one competitor helped the other win... (show picture of Brownlee brothers) ... they were brothers

In verses 25–27, Jesus contrasts two systems of authority. The rulers of the Gentiles "lord it over" others. Power is exercised through dominance and Greatness is measured by control.

But in God's kingdom, the measure is inverted: "Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant." The term used for servant refers to one who waits upon others, one who assists with their needs. The road to greatness is not upwards, but downwards.

II. Two concepts of service: Satisfaction vs. Humility

In Matthew 20, Jesus exposes the disciples' misunderstanding of greatness. They desired positions at His right and left. They were not rejecting Jesus - they were following Him - but they were still measuring greatness according to personal elevation. Philippians 2 now takes us beneath that behaviour and reveals what causes this misunderstanding. There are, in essence, two concepts of service competing within the human heart: **service rooted in satisfaction** and **service rooted in humility**.

a. Service Rooted in Satisfaction

In verse 3 apostle Paul writes: “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit...” The phrase “selfish ambition” describes the pursuit of personal advancement, even within a spiritual setting. It is the same spirit present in Matthew 20. James and John were willing to follow Jesus, but they wanted their devotion to secure distinction.

Service rooted in satisfaction asks the following questions. What will this benefit for me? Will this elevate my status? Will I be noticed?

Let me tell you that, it is possible to serve Christ while still protecting self-interest.

The disciples in Matthew 20 were not asking to abandon Jesus. They were asking to be honoured beside Him. Their service was intertwined with personal advancement.

And when the other ten became angry, it revealed that the same ambition was alive in them.

Satisfaction-driven service competes, it compares, and it quietly seeks reward.

But such service cannot carry another’s burden for long. Because burden bearing often involves inconvenience and suffering, the very things ambition avoids.

b. Service Rooted in Humility

Paul continues: “But in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”

Humility is not thinking less of one’s value; it is choosing to lower one’s claim to preference. It is the deliberate repositioning of self.

Verse 4 deepens it: “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

Humility reverses the direction of concern.

It is not concerned about: “Where will I sit?” But “Who will I serve?”

c. The mindset of Christ: The Cure for Selfish Ambition

Paul then anchors everything in Christ: “have the same mindset as Christ Jesus”.

In Matthew we see the disciples grasping for position, in Philippians we see Christ refusing to grasp at privilege. “He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped...”

The contrast is sharp: The disciples reached upward for honour, while Christ came down in obedience. He emptied Himself. He took the form of a servant. He humbled Himself to death - even death on a cross. And He did so not for satisfaction, not for recognition, not for personal advancement, but for the salvation of others.

This is humility in its purest form: absorbing loss so another may gain.

And just Jesus describes in Matthew, that suffering goes before glory, Paul confirms it: “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow”.

But Christ did not humble Himself to be exalted. He humbled Himself in obedience, trusting the Father with the outcome. That is what separates satisfaction from humility. Satisfaction serves in order to receive.

Humility serves to obey.

III. Developing the Habit of Burden Bearing

If we want to follow Jesus Christ, then we must become burden bearers, this habit must become instinctive. Illustration: When we walk, we don’t think about balancing and which muscles to use to go up or down the stairs... we just do it, but at one point in life we learned it...

1. Examine your Ambitions

Having dreams is not a bad thing. But are those dreams include Growing the seed God has planted in us? Does selfish ambition still shape our relationships? Do we seek recognition more than duty or influence more than service? Using reflective questions can help.

2. Foster Attentiveness

Philippians 2:4 calls us to look not only to our own interests but also to those of others. This requires focusing on others. It demands that we notice what others ask for help. Listen! Listen! And listen a bit more!

3. Be willing to Accept the Cost

When Jesus asked, “Can you drink the cup?” He made clear that participation in His mission involves suffering.

Bearing each other’s burdens will cost time, emotional energy, and convenience. Yet such cost is not loss; it is formation. In carrying others, we become more mature, more Christlike.

Let me finish with an encouragement: Holding a heavy object. One hand... two hands... When burdens are shared, they do not disappear, but they become bearable. If His life is truly planted within us, then His humility must grow within us. Carrying one another's burdens is not an optional kindness... It is evidence that the seed of Christ is maturing.

So, let's not struggle for position, but embrace participation in one another's lives, until Christ's mindset is fully developed in us. **Amen**

MP 66 - Broken for me

Broken for me, broken for you
The Body of Jesus, broken for you

He offered His Body	This is My Body
He poured out His Soul	Given for you
Jesus was broken	Eat it rememb'ring
That we might be whole	I died for you
Broken for me...	Broken for me...

Come to My table	This is My Blood
And with Me dine	I shed for you
Eat of My bread	For your forgiveness
And drink of My wine	Making you new
Broken for me...	<i>Colin and Janet Lunt</i>

Communion

Come to the table of Jesus our Redeemer!
Jesus invites you here as part of the people of God.
Come to the table humbly,
not because you have earned a place here,
but because you need mercy and help.
Come because you love God, and want to love God more.
Come because Jesus first loved us, and gave himself for us.
Come because you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
Come because you want to experience the mystery of God's grace.

On the night he was handed over, Jesus had a meal with his friends.
He took a loaf of bread and after giving thanks to God,
he broke it and gave it to his disciples.
He said, "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."
After supper Jesus took the cup of wine;
and after giving thanks, gave it to them and said,
"Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Whenever you drink it, remember me."

Let us pray: God our Creator,
thank you for the gift of your son Jesus Christ,
whose love pursues us our whole life long.
Thank you, Jesus, for giving your life to us in word and deed,
even unto death, even death on a cross.
Come Holy Spirit, feed us with your love
that we may be filled with power
to love God with all our hearts and souls and minds. Amen. *[the bread and wine are served]*

Prayer of response:

We have come to the Lord's table,
 we have eaten the bread of heaven.
 God is the one who will transform us
 so that we can see with Jesus' eyes,
 hear with Jesus' ears, speak with Jesus' mouth;
 so that we can be the body of Christ in the world,
 proclaiming the good news of God's reign.
 Come Lord Jesus! Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Father God, we come before you today in the knowledge of you taking hold of our lives and our burdens. Through your love we find the challenges we meet every day lightened by your love for us and your presence within us.

Jesus, we bring the challenges of the world to you, remembering the Ukraine and Russia's enforced war, Afghanistan, Iran, Gaza, Sudan, also knowing there are so many other places in your world where strife and terror exist. In lifting these places up to you Jesus, we are asking that you will open the hearts of all humanity that peace may be restored.

Holy Spirit, we bring the leaders and governments of the world before you, that their mind and heart be awakened to your words, and would bring justice to all.

Lastly Lord, we lift ourselves and our church to you and in your mercy hear our prayer. AMEN.

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

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. Amen.

BPW 473

Brother, sister, let me serve you,
 let me be as Christ to you;
 pray that I may have the grace to
 let you be my servant too.

I will weep when you are weeping;
 when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
 I will share your joy and sorrow
 till we've seen this journey through.

We are pilgrims on a journey
 and companions on the road;
 we are here to help each other
 walk the mile and bear the load.

When we sing to God in heaven
 we shall find such harmony,
 born of all we've known together
 of Christ's love and agony.

I will hold the Christ-light for you
 in the night-time of your fear;
 I will hold my hand out to you,
 speak the peace you long to hear.

Brother, sister, let me serve you,
 let me be as Christ to you;
 pray that I may have the grace to
 let you be my servant too.

RICHARD GILLARD (b. 1953) / © 1977 Scripture in Song/ Thankyou Music

Blessing

The Lord bless you, the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you and give you his peace.

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 this coming week:

Wednesday 18	10:30 12:00 2:00	Renew Café Bible study iCaf English lesson and First Steps course
Thursday 19	10:30 10:30	Toddlers Bible Study
Friday 20	10.30 5:00pm	Prayer Meeting in Upper Room Table Tennis
Sunday 22	10.30 After service	Sunday Worship Short special church meeting about the roof

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