

BEING CHURCH



2. Discovering Faith



3 MAY, 2020

Welcome to our second week exploring **BEING CHURCH**. Last week we started by *Discovering Church*; this week we *Discover Faith*. We trust your week has gone well, that despite the continued inconvenience of “lockdown”, you have experienced God’s goodness and His treasure chest of love.

Let **THIS** music open our time of worship in quiet contemplation.

PRAYER of WELCOME

God of Eternity and Life, whose love, grace and mercy sustains us in a world where evil thrives because its master still thinks he is invincible and indestructible. I thank You my Lord God, for Your gift of rest through the night, and renewed in body, mind and spirit, for light that greeted me as I opened my eyes this morning. I join Your Church as it gathers in different ways this morning, in front of computer screens and televisions, on telephones and listening to radio, and as we are able, standing or seated on chairs, sofas, wheelchairs, recliners and for some for whom their bed, but all of us united in one spirit, poised to worship you. Thank you for welcoming us into Your marvellous presence.

Blessed are You, O Lord my God, Ruler of the Universe, Who renews daily His work of creation. **AMEN.**

HYMN **O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,**

SCRIPTURE READING **Psalm 116**

I love the Lord because He hears my prayers and answers them. Because He bends down and listens, I will pray as long as I breathe! Death stared me in the face—I was frightened and sad. Then I cried, “Lord, save me!” How kind He is! How good He is! So merciful, this God of ours! The Lord protects the simple and the childlike; I was facing death, and then he saved me. Now I can relax. For the Lord has done this wonderful miracle for me. He has saved me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling. I shall live! Yes, in his presence—here on earth!

In my discouragement I thought, “They are lying when they say I will recover.” But now what can I offer Jehovah for all he has done for me? I will bring him an offering of wine[b] and praise his name for saving me. I will publicly bring him the sacrifice I vowed I would. His loved ones are very precious to him, and he does not lightly let them die.

O Lord, you have freed me from my bonds, and I will serve you forever. I will worship you and offer you a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Here in the courts of the Temple in Jerusalem, before all the people, I will pay everything I vowed to the Lord. Praise the Lord.

HYMN **Standing on the promises of God my Saviour**

SCRIPTURE READING Hebrews 10:32 - 11:3

You must never forget those past days when you had received the light and went through such a great and painful struggle. It was partly because everyone’s eye was on you as you endured harsh words and hard experiences, partly because you threw in your lot with those who suffered much the same. You sympathised with those who were put in prison and you were cheerful when your own goods were confiscated, for you knew that you had a much more solid and lasting treasure in Heaven. Don’t throw away your trust now—it carries with it a rich reward in the world to come. Patient endurance is what you need if, after doing God’s will, you are to receive what he has promised. ‘For yet a little while, and he who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him’.

Surely we are not going to be people who cower back and are lost, but people who maintain their faith until the salvation of their souls is complete!

Now faith means putting our full confidence in the things we hope for, it means being certain of things we cannot see. It was this kind of faith that won their reputation for the saints of old. And it is after all, only by faith that our minds accept as fact that the whole scheme of time and space was created by

God's command—that the world which we can see has come into being through principles which are invisible.

PRAYER

You Word My Lord, is a lamp to guide my feet, and light for my path. Open You Word to me this morning and let it illuminate my mind, that I might know you better and rejoice in your faithfulness. Loving God. **AMEN.**

MESSAGE

I have often heard the phrase, "I have faith". It seems incomplete, so I wait for the person to continue, but they don't!

Everyone has faith. Living would be impossible if people did not have faith! Even those who do not profess a religion have expressions of faith: that there will always be enough air to sustain life, that Paracetamol will ease (perhaps cure) a headache, that food will satisfy hunger, that the chair they are about to sit on will not break, that tomorrow might be better than today, and so on.

What then is "Faith"? Some create or extract a statement of belief and say they believe it, but cannot prove it, which to them is faith. Others pick a "statement of faith" and believe no explanations are necessary. To question it they believe, is sin.

Faith is neither wishful thinking, nor believing in things that do not exist. When translated from the Greek, the best word to describe Faith, is Trust. To say you trust someone is to first declare the person exists, and then proclaim the person's character - he/she is worthy of being trusted.

When the Author of the book, Hebrews says, "***faith is being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we do not see***", he is not recommending "blind faith". The Author is inviting us into the reality of trusting God because He exists, and He can be trusted, therefore worthy of our trust.

In chapter 10, the Author describes how the annual sacrifice by the High Priest in the Temple was replaced and made perfect by Jesus' sacrifice on the

cross, once and for all time¹, and invites the reader not to *throw away your trust (in God's plan of salvation) now—it carries with it a rich reward in the world to come. Patient endurance is what you need if, after doing God's will, you are to receive what He has promised. 'For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not delay, (but for) now the just shall live by faith; if anyone draws back, however, My soul has no pleasure in him.'*² Surely we are not going to be people who cower back and are lost, but people who maintain their faith until the salvation of their souls is complete!³

Chapter 11 then follows with a list of men and women, *the people in the days of old who earned a good reputation*, who did not cower back, but maintained their faith (lived by it) until the salvation of their souls was complete.

The Author explains the basis of their faith: *It is only by faith that our minds accept as fact, that the whole scheme of time and space was created at God's command, that the world which we can see, has come into being through principles which are invisible (v.3).*

As did the people of old, so do we live in God's creation, **by faith!** None of us were present at creation to watch God create the universe and the earth using principles that are invisible to us. God "creates" out of things we cannot see—both in a literal, physical and a spiritual sense. Just because we do not understand how God will act, does not mean He cannot, or change His mind and will not act. It is in the person of God, whose character can be trusted, that we *put our full confidence in the substance of things we hope for; it means being certain of the evidence of things we cannot see.* Placing our full confidence in people and in systems leads to frustration and disappointment, because both are not perfect, both are fallible and there is a greater chance of both misleading us, away from Truth.

Each person listed in Hebrews 11 lived their lives in full confidence that God would do as He had promised.

¹ Hebrews 10:1–18

² Habakkuk 2:3-4.

³ Hebrew 10: 35-39 (The New Testament in Modern English by J.B Phillips copyright © 1960, 1972)

And what has God promised? That He would redeem us (His most precious creation, made by His hands and breathed into by His Spirit) from the deception of this world, into His perfect eternal Kingdom.

This is the declaration we hold onto with full confidence, without the slightest hesitation, because God is utterly dependable. In the meantime (as we wait), let us think of (pray for) one another and how we can encourage each other to love and do good deeds, not neglecting our need and obligation to participate in meeting as Church, as some do. Let us do all we can to help one another's faith, and this more earnestly as we see the final day drawing ever nearer.⁴

We discover faith and learn to trust God as we spend time with Him, as individuals. As this relationship grows, it becomes stronger and bolsters our faith in God through Christ. We are urged to find ways of encouraging love and helping others, not avoiding worshiping together as some do, but motivating each other in their walk of faith, because the day of Christ's return is not long in coming.

The greatest joy in the Christian life comes in finding The Person whom we can trust without a shadow of doubt, and discovering that we can place our absolute and complete faith in Him. He our God, is completely trustworthy!

We don't know when we shall resume meeting together as Church, but we are meeting as Church during these times of worship; we are being Church when we phone each other out of love and concern, and as we reach out and help, as we are able. We do all this and much more because our faith is in our God who revealed Himself to us through His Son, through His word and now continually through the Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

LISTEN **In Christ alone...**

PRAYER

God invites you, "Do not walk in darkness; step into The Light. Trust Me. Hold My hand and I will lead you"

⁴ Hebrews 10:23-25

I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides me there is no god. I equip and strengthen you for battle, even though you do not know or recognise me. I do this so people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, there is no one besides me; I AM the Lord, and there is no other! (Isaiah 45:5-6)

HYMN **Lord of the Church, we pray for Your renewing**

BENEDICTION

Place your trust in God, the Creator of all things, and the Sustainer of all Life, and let your Trust in Him be your visible witness of faith.

In the midst of sickness, prayer with faith

In the midst of isolation and loneliness, speak hope with faith

In the midst of death, let your presence be God's tranquil comfort.

For the glory of Christ who will soon claim us His Church.

AMEN.

LISTEN As we bring this time of worship to a close, let this beautiful rendition of, **It is well with my soul** refresh your soul!

We are available to support you, with prayer, care and pastorally.

Please contact us using contact details on our website home page.

As a member of Botley Baptist Church, please do not forget to remit your tithe and offering, either directly into the bank or drop-off your envelope at Church.

If you are not attending this Church and would like to contribute to its ministry, please click "EMAIL US" at the top of the home page. Thank you

HYMNS & SONGS

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!

Bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
with gold of obedience, and incense of lowliness,
kneel and adore him: the Lord is his Name!

Low at his feet lay thy burden of carefulness,
high on his heart he will bear it for thee,
and comfort thy sorrows, and answer thy prayerfulness,
guiding thy steps as may best for thee be.

Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness
of the poor wealth thou wouldst reckon as thine;
for truth in its beauty, and love in its tenderness,
these are the offerings to lay on his shrine.

These, though we bring them in trembling and fearfulness,
he will accept for the Name that is dear;
mornings of joy give for evenings of tearfulness,
trust for our trembling and hope for our fear.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!

bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
with gold of obedience, and incense of lowliness,
kneel and adore him: the Lord is his Name!

Standing on the promises of Christ my King

Through eternal ages let his praises ring
Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing
Standing on the promises of God

Standing, standing
Standing on the promises of God my Savior
Standing, standing
I'm standing on the promises of God

Standing on the promises, I cannot fall
Listening every moment to the Spirit's call
Resting in my Savior as my all in all
Standing on the promises of God

Standing, standing
Standing on the promises of Christ my Savior
Standing, standing
I'm standing on the promises of God.

Lord of the Church, We Pray for Our Renewing

Christ over all, our undivided aim.
Fire of the Spirit, burn for our enduing,
wind of the Spirit, fan the living flame!
We turn to Christ amid our fear and failing,
the will that lacks the courage to be free,
the weary labours, all but unavailing,
to bring us nearer what a church should be.

Lord of the church, we seek a Father's blessing,
a true repentance and a faith restored,
a swift obedience and a new possessing,
filled with the Holy Spirit of the Lord!
We turn to Christ from all our restless striving,
unnumbered voices with a single prayer:
the living water for our souls' reviving,
in Christ to live, and love and serve and care.

Lord of the church, we long for our uniting,
true to one calling, by one vision stirred;
one cross proclaiming and one creed reciting,
one in the truth of Jesus and his word.
So lead us on; till toil and trouble ended,
one church triumphant one new song shall sing,
to praise his glory, risen and ascended,
Christ over all, the everlasting King!

Timothy Dudley-Smith (b. 1926) Educated at Pembroke College and Ridley Hall, Cambridge, Dudley-Smith has served the Church of England since his ordination in 1950. He has occupied a number of church positions, including parish priest in the diocese of Southwark (1953-1962), archdeacon of Norwich (1973-1981), and bishop of Thetford, Norfolk, from 1981 until his retirement in 1992. He also edited a Christian magazine, Crusade, which was founded after Billy Graham's 1955 London crusade. Dudley-Smith began writing comic verse while a student at Cambridge; he did not begin to write hymns until the 1960s. Many of his several hundred hymn texts have been collected in Lift Every Heart: Collected Hymns 1961-1983 (1984).