

Sunday 5th February 2023 (A parade service)

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.

God is ever present, around us and within us, we worship together in God.

Introduction

If you know you have done something wrong, how do you behave?

If you have hurt someone with your words or actions how do you behave around that person?

When we do things that hurt others, we are also hurting God. The prophet Isaiah recognises that the people of Israel are hurting others by their words and actions and at the same time they are behaving as if they are doing nothing wrong as they worship God. He is very frustrated.

Reading Isaiah 58:1-7, 9-10 ([Youth Bible](#))

The people of Israel worship God as if they have done nothing wrong, but worshipping God means making every effort to follow God's rules for loving one another and that means not hurting one another.

Story – I'm Sorry by Sam McBratney [Listen here](#)

Who shouted first? What did he think should happen? Was he right?

Reflection

Do you put salt on your chips? Why?

Do you put salt in your porridge? Why?

Would you add it if it made no difference?

Reading Matthew 5:13-16 ([Youth Bible](#))

When we follow Jesus we are meant to make a difference, like salt. We are meant to shine like a light to help people see a different way but that supposes that we are making the best choices we can and acting in love.

Following the way of Jesus means being honest with yourself and others about what you do and admitting when a choice has been the wrong choice.

Story – The wisdom of the mandolin

Once upon a time, in a Kingdom far away, the King was seriously ill, and the doctors did not know what to do. The King was much loved, known for his wise decisions and his compassion so, when a visiting musician came to visit the town he became aware of the great sadness that hung over the town. His songs were filled with that sadness. When he had been playing a while he asked the people around why they were so sad and they explained about their fears for their King. Now the musician believed that his instrument, a fine mandolin, was possessed of wisdom and guided his songs, he suggested that his mandolin may have an answer for the people. He began to sing and as he came to the end of his song he sang of the King needing to wear the shirt of a happy man. The people were astounded and immediately set about trying to find a happy man.

They searched among the leaders of the town, but found they were all concerned about increasing their wealth and status. They searched among the merchants of the town, but they were all concerned about a recession and rising costs. They searched among the ordinary people, but they were all fearful of the future and feeling oppressed. What were they to do, was there no one happy with their lot?

Then, one day they heard someone singing in the forest at the edge of the town. Curious they went closer and listened, his song was about the sunlight on his back and the beauty of the trees around, he sang of the simple fare that nourished him and the refreshing spring water that quenched his thirst. They realised here was their happy man. However, their joy was short lived when they realised he did not have a shirt.

They stayed there listening, deep in thought, and as they did so they found themselves feeling a peace and contentment they had not experienced before. Into the peace came the mandolin player and as he picked up the song of the man he added his own words – learn from me and you can be happy. At the end of the

song he left, but his song stayed with them and very soon the King was offered more shirts than he could ever need and the cloud of sorrow lifted from the town. (Traditional Story)

God always forgives but we may have to accept the consequences of our actions and make amends. God's forgiveness only helps us when we acknowledge our need for forgiveness and that usually means being brave enough to say sorry. Then we have to learn from that and change what we do, make a different choice in our life.

When we are content and happy then we will shine with love and we will make a difference in the world. As Isaiah said:

"If you stop making trouble for others,

if you stop using cruel words and pointing your finger at others,

¹⁰ if you feed those who are hungry

and take care of the needs of those who are troubled,

then your light will shine in the darkness, and you will be bright like sunshine at noon.