

Greenleaf Road Baptist Church

GRBC Online: 10.01.21



Welcome

Hello Everyone,

My name is Dan Copperwheat. I am the Minister and Pastor of Greenleaf Road Baptist Church in Walthamstow.

Welcome to GRBC Online.

Well Good Morning! Today you may hear in the background the activity of a lockdown household...noises now familiar to many parents up and down the nation are grappling with the challenges of zoom, online classes and becoming part-time teachers and juggling children!

Today, we have Lauraine Everitt opening Scripture and helping us mark the moment in the Christian called Epiphany, also known as Theophany in the east. This is a Christian feast day and although traditional we Baptist's have not made a big thing following with detail the Christian Calendar, that this moment celebrates the revelation of God incarnate as Jesus Christ as a continuation of Christmas joy is, something we will benefit from!

In particular, as we note today the feast commemorates principally the visit of the Magi to the Christ Child, and thus Jesus' physical manifestation to the Gentiles, like the Magi, the Centurion and, indeed us! That we have been included in the story of God, is grace to us. That is Mercy and Love directed toward us because of who God is...

Of course, there is invitation to us, that if we are to meet with this God, we should value what he values and become more like him, in his mercy... blessed are the merciful indeed!

Just by way of reminder for Greenleaf covenant family members, please continue to give generously, perhaps today we will prompted afresh by the gifts given to the Christ Child. I want to thank those who have been giving their time, energy and money to the mission and ministry at GRBC. As I am on part-time furlough and limited in my capacity to do what we have done, it is going to take the contribution of the family to sustain that mission and ministry into the future and beyond lockdown.

Call to worship

Read by

We proclaim Christ Jesus as Lord.

For the God who said, 'Out of darkness light shall shine', has caused his light to shine in our hearts, the light which is knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

- 2 Cor 4: 5, 6

Song: As with gladness men of old

William C Dix (1837 - 1898) CCLI: 4772707

As with gladness men of old
did the guiding star behold,
as with joy they hailed its light,
leading onward, beaming bright:
so, most gracious Lord, may we
evermore your splendour see.

As with joyful steps they sped
Saviour, to your lowly bed,
there to bend the knee before
you, whom heaven and earth adore:
so with ever-quickening pace
may we seek your throne of grace.

As they offered gifts most rare
at your cradle plain and bare,
so may we with holy joy
pure and free from sin's alloy,
all our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to you, our heavenly king.

Holy Jesus, every day
keep us in the narrow way,
and when earthly things are past,
bring our ransomed souls at last:
where they need no star to guide,
where no clouds your glory hide.

In the heavenly city bright
none shall need created light
you, its light, its joy, its crown,

you its sun which goes not down;
there for ever may we sing
alleluias to our king.

Confession

Read by Gomer Liognco

Journeying God, who beckons us to join you on the road, be with all your peoples as we set out into this new year.

Give us courage to be cautious, strength to the weary, vision to the short-sighted, hope to those who are broken in spirit.

When we are unsure of where you are leading and cannot chart our path or progress, give us a trust and toleration of not knowing.

When we are certain about the pattern of your mission, give us humility – and grace to listen and learn from each new situation.

(Gathering for Worship - abridged)

Intercession:

Read by Amele Dibaba

As the wise men brought gifts to the Christ-child, so may we bring gifts to one another in the world:

Gold

May we share material resources justly; practise fair trade; and exercise mutual deference.

Frankincense

May we promote freedom of thought, speech and worship; find opportunities for all to grow in grace and stature; take quietness with us wherever we go; and exercise mutual encouragement.

Myrrh

May we stand in solidarity with the oppressed and suffering; weep with those who weep; lament the atrocities of history; bring balm for tomorrow and exercise mutual love.

Reading: Luke 7:1-10

Read by Keith Everitt

7 When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. 2 There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. 3 The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. 4 When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, 5 because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." 6 So Jesus went with them.

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. 7 That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8 For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

9 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." 10 Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

Sermon Series: 'Be' attitudes – Resolutions for Living in a Covid World **Week 2: Blessed are the merciful**

Lauraine Everitt

Hello. I hope that it is not too late to wish you all the best new year you can have at the moment.

Today the church remembers Epiphany (which happened on 6th January) – the manifestation or showing forth of Christ to the wise men (magi). And one of the hymns most obviously associated with this is the one we sang/heard earlier – As with gladness men of old. And the older version (probably the one most of us sang at school) says this in verse 2: As with joyful steps they sped,/Saviour, to thy lowly bed,/ there to bend the knee before/him whom heaven and earth adore,/ so may we with willing feet/ ever seek thy mercy-seat. Today we are considering the attitude of being merciful – so park the carol and we will return to it.

Mercy is an old-fashioned word or value that is defined by equally old-fashioned words or values of compassion and forbearance. It suggests to us ideas of law, justice and being in the power of someone who does not owe kindness to us. Mercy is not the opposite of justice – just a different way of dealing with the penalty. Like forgiveness, it doesn't belittle sin or wrongdoing and their consequences, or suggest that these things are unimportant. Instead mercy sets sin at its just value ('for the wages of sin is death' Rom 6:23) but suggests that the appropriate penalty will help no-one – not us, not God, not the victims, but compassion and forbearance can

restore the wrongdoer to him or herself, to the community and to God – to be in that corrected relationship that God wants us to be in.

There are lots of examples of the mercy of God in both the Old and New Testaments, but this one (the story of the centurion) shows the outworking of mercy on all sides. The main character (apart from Jesus) is a fairly important member of an occupying military force (think major or lieutenant-colonel). He could easily have thrown his weight around and trampled over the indigenous community he found himself in. He does not need to do anything for that community. He could just have imposed his will on them. But, it appears that he has made an effort to find out about the local community and even its faith. He has built a synagogue for them. And I don't think it is stretching it too far to suggest that, through this act of kindness and compassion, he must have got to know the local elders and builders! Thus, when he is in trouble and wants to appeal to the new Rabbi on the block, he has friends in the community who are willing to intercede for him.

The centurion's relationship with his servant is also interesting. He valued his servant – not just as having monetary value, but as a person he was willing to put himself out for, and to humble himself for. You will note how his request to Jesus is framed – not, 'Come and do what I want immediately' but 'Don't even put yourself out to come, but just give my petition the smallest amount of your attention, and that will be enough.' The centurion understood how power worked, and he perceived in Jesus greater power than his own, but the same attention to the less exalted people that he himself exemplifies.

And having shown mercy to his community and his servant, the centurion is the recipient of the divine lovingkindness of Jesus, who not only does as he requests, but commends him for his faith and perception. Indeed, you might also say the centurion's understanding of Jesus is an epiphany. Now, most of us are not in exalted positions of power in any way – we are not judges or part of occupying armies. But some of us do have some power – we have people to whom we can make a difference for good or ill – if we are teachers, employers, members of the police force or anyone dealing with the public. Jesus could have treated this centurion as part of a group – the occupying, and therefore hated, army. But he treats him as an individual and with compassion. If we can, we should put compassion for individuals before our perceptions of justice for a group.

And if you think you are without any power, think again, because we all have the power to think badly of people rather than well, to be judgemental in our attitudes. We can all treat people as part of a homogenous mass and not give thought to their individuality. Everyone is uniquely made in God's image

– so dismissing people as ‘them’ (part of a group we don’t like) is the opposite of showing mercy and it is the opposite of giving people the benefit of the doubt and the restoration that God in his very character does. The mercy-seat in the old carol is a name for the throne of God in the Tabernacle, and the interface, as it were, between the seat and God is the atonement cover. God is symbolically seated on mercy – it is his cushion – the place where he is comfortable.

The centurion in the story also rests on mercy and it comes back to him too. The Beatitude says that the merciful will be shown mercy – it is a virtuous circle. Be comfortable giving people the benefit of the doubt, assume good rather than evil motivations – it will make a difference to all your relationships, not least with God whose ultimate restorative loving compassion is through his act of mercy in sending his Son, whose birth we are still celebrating.

Song: Everyone needs compassion

Ben Fielding, Reuben Morgan CCLI: 4591782

Everyone needs compassion
A love that's never failing
Let mercy fall on me
Everyone needs forgiveness
The kindness of a Savior
The hope of nations

Savior, he can move the mountains
My God is mighty to save
He is mighty to save
Forever author of Salvation
He rose and conquered the grave
Jesus conquered the grave

So take me as you find me
All my fears and failures
And fill my life again
I give my life to follow
Everything I believe in
And now I surrender
I surrender

Shine your light and let the whole world see
We're singing
For the glory of the risen King, Jesus

Epiphany blessing:

Visit, O Blessed Lord,
our hearts and homes with the gladness of your presence.
Bless all with the gift of your love;
and grant that we may manifest your love to each other
and to all whose lives we touch.
May we grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of you;
guide, comfort, and strengthen us in peace,
O Jesus Christ, now and for ever.
Amen.