



Newcastle City Temple Connected

Reimagining Church - Let's Worship together

The content of this weeks 'NCT Connected' largely includes material prepared for the second day of the Territorial Congress which goes live via Youtube on Sunday 25th October 2020. Please be reminded there will be no Zoom Worship this Sunday - as those who can are encouraged to watch the streamed content. Details as follows;

Online Territorial Congress Saturday 24th October at 3pm and Sunday 25th October at 9am, with Commissioners Lyndon and Bronwyn Buckingham (IHQ) supported by our Territorial Leaders via

www.youtube.com/user/salvationarmyvideo

SUNDAY: 25th October 2020

Theme: LIGHT, LIFE AND LOVE

Key Text: 1 John 4:7-12

Opening Song: Crown Him with Many Crowns (SASB 358) https://youtu.be/iDy1MQOy1_E

International Staff Songsters: Breathe <https://youtu.be/45Z3O2wRLXw>

Prayer

Heavenly father, we want to centre our thoughts on you, the life you give us and the love that you are and that we all share. Life is your precious gift, from our first breath to our last. We are grateful for everything that means: our families, our friends, our joys, our sadness.

We thank you for everything we are able to do together as a human family. For the richness of lived experience, for music and art, for food and shelter, for science and learning, we thank you. For adventure, freedom, travel and exploration, we thank you.

Teach us to share what we have to enrich the lives of those we encounter on life's journey.

Help us to look after our surroundings, our planet and each other. Teach us to remember that you are love. Help us to show that love to each other – generously, extravagantly and without prejudice. In our relationships, help us to be kind and compassionate, to listen as much as we talk.

We pray this because we want to follow the way of Jesus and we recognise that God is life and God is love. AMEN

International Staff Songsters: 'The Healing Waters' (SASB 742) <https://youtu.be/zGk1LPz3f9g>

'Healing Waters' is a Songster arrangement of Albert Orsborn's song 'When shall I come unto the healing waters.' Verse 3 provides the theme for the Congress, 'Light, life and love...'

Bible Reading: 1 John 4:7-12

Birmingham Citadel Singing Company: 'All my thanks' <https://youtu.be/9paYw1gIiIg>

A song based on Psalm 54, written by Gavin Lamplough and recorded by the singing company members during lockdown.

International Staff Songsters: 'What a beautiful name' <https://youtu.be/2ZBNG2qElds>

*What a beautiful name it is,
What a beautiful name it is,
The name of Jesus Christ my King.
What a beautiful name it is,
Nothing compares to this,
What a beautiful name it is,
The name of Jesus.*

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Bible Message: The Chief of the Staff (Commissioner Lyndon Buckingham)

Light, life, and love. Powerful words in their own right, but blistering with power when you draw them together, particularly with a Christian understanding. These three words find a natural resting place in the person of Jesus Christ. They are the embodiment of who he is and who he came to be among us.

It was Jesus himself who said 'I am the Light of the World, I am the Bread of Life, I am the expression of God's love.' My words today are 'light' and 'love'. In my preparation, I have to be honest with you, I really wanted to change the order. In my heart, I really wanted to talk about 'love' first, and then 'life', and so I decided 'Why not? Who's going to stop me?' So I am going to speak first of all about this beautiful, powerful word, 'love'.

The Bible teaches that God is love, not just that he has the capacity to love, but that he is love. Love describes who he is. He is perfect in love, it's his nature. He acts, he engages, he responds in love. His motivation is love, his driver is love, his aim is love. Even when he disciplines or corrects, even then he is acting in love. God is love. Love comes from God because God is love. What did our reading say to us? 'Dear friends let us love one another, for love comes from God' (1 John 4:7).

Now I want to say to you my brothers and sisters that perhaps the most powerful words that I can offer to you this morning are, 'God loves you.' I'm praying today that if you don't remember anything else, you will take a hold of this. You will have what I like to call an epiphany or a wake-up moment, where you realise afresh, or perhaps even for the first time, the full extent of God's love for you. You're not condemned by the creator, you're not judged by him, you're not scorned by him, you're not abandoned by him, you're not ridiculed by him, he loves you. Hear it today, know it to be true today, receive it today – God loves you.

God knew you before you were born. He knows your challenges, he knows your circumstances, he knows your dreams, your aspirations, your hopes, your fears and your concerns. He knows you and he loves you. And the Bible would say to us that the proof of his love to you is most intimately expressed, most divinely expressed and revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the proof of God's love for you. For God so loved the world, that he sent us his son Jesus. In his life, in his teaching, in his example, Jesus was the epitome of God's love. The intimacy of the relationship that he enjoyed with his heavenly Father was a relationship bathed in love.

I'm asking the question. Do you know this love? Have you been captured by it? Have you been set free by it? Have you been healed by it? Have you been restored by it? Have you been bathed in it and empowered by it? Are you willing to allow God, the creator of the universe who is love, to express his love toward you? I'm praying that you will let God love you today.

Let me ask you another question. It's one thing to say that God loves you. I want to ask you today if you are a lover of God. Do you love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your strength as the Scriptures ask us to do? And the reason that I ask the question is because I'm convinced that abundant life, fullness of life, not only depends on an understanding of God's love for us, but also on our reciprocating that with our love for him. The intimacy of the relationship that we enjoy with our creator holds the key to fullness of life, to abundance of life. So I ask you today, are you a lover of God?

If you answer 'yes', then I have to ask you this question, how is it that you love him? Would anybody know that you are a lover of God? How would I be able to tell that you love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your strength? You might answer, 'We worship him, we respect him, we acknowledge him, we praise him, we give testimony to him, we serve him in our corps.' And all these become very real and very practical ways in which we demonstrate our love for God. But the Bible would say that perhaps the most powerful demonstration of the reality of our love for God is the quality of the love for our neighbour. The way in which we love each other actually becomes a demonstration of the powerful nature of our love relationship with God.

The Scripture reading said, 'Dear friends, since God so loves us, we also ought to love one another' (1 John 4:11). So when Jesus said, 'I have come in order that you might have life – life in all its fullness' (John 10:10 *Good News Bible*), what did he mean? What was he saying about the fullness of life?

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Many through the years have proven that this fullness of life is not about the accumulation of stuff. It's not about wealth, it's not about fame, it's not about recognition. Many who have these things are still miserable and would say that they don't have fullness of life. Perhaps the Lord was expressing an understanding that fullness of life is deeply connected to our understanding of love, hence the reason I wanted to put love first. If we understand deeply that we are loved by our creator, if we're exploring purposefully and intently what it means for us to be a lover of God. If we are in that mode, the overflow of that is our relationships with other people – and they benefit from that first relationship. And in that connection, there comes a fullness of life.

When Jesus said to his disciples 'You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world' (Matthew 5:13 and 14), I can't help but wonder whether he had in his mind this idea that the salt and light would not be judgmental or condemning or separated from, but that rather the salt and light, this flavour, this colour that would so infiltrate the world, would be one of love, of grace, of mercy, of kindness, of gentleness – that these qualities, these fruit of the Spirit, these benefits of a love relationship would be experienced within the community of believers, and would spill over to touch and witness to the world that love is the ultimate answer.

Abundant life begins when we understand deeply in our hearts that God loves us. Fullness of life starts to come when we reciprocate and give God love for who he is as well as for what he has done. And fullness of life becomes so real for us when we see that our relationships with other people are in fact an expression of our love for God. Not just in our family, although of course in our family. Not just at our local corps, but of course at our local corps. But what about our neighbour, our work colleague, the stranger? Jesus even made reference to the enemy. Could it be that in these days what God is calling for from us, his children, is that we would demonstrate to the world the power of love? And that in exploring the power of love, we also discover fullness of life?

I'm praying that you will be captured by the truth that God is love. I'm praying that you'll be captured by the truth that God loves you. I'm praying that you will either begin or continue to be an avid lover of God, that you will praise him, that you will acknowledge him, that you will surrender yourself to him, that you will allow him to love and lead you into fullness of life. And I'm praying that you'll be captured by this concept that the Spirit of God would want you to be agents of love – agents of love in a world that desperately needs to understand what love is and what fullness of life really means. May God bless you.

RESPONSE: The International Staff Band play 'Consecration Hymn' (SASB 623)

We are invited to respond to the Bible message by praying at home and/or by sending prayer requests to the Territorial Prayer Network at saprayernetwork@salvationarmy.org.uk. Prayer requests can also be sent to the network via *Lieut-Colonel Jonathan Roberts, The Salvation Army, 101 Newington Causeway, London SE1 6BN.*

<https://youtu.be/-jb2Fm9rSuY>

Prayer Poem: Major Howard Webber

Fill me with your Spirit, Lord,
Fill me with your love.
Fill this empty heart of mine,
Come down gentle dove.
You see all my self- concern,
Lovelessness and pride;
Help me open up my heart,
Place your love inside.

Fill me with your Spirit, Lord,
Fill me with your power.
Give to me your source of strength,
From this very hour.
You have seen me trying hard,
Failing every time,
Show me how to let you now,
Live your life in mine.

Fill me with your Spirit, Lord,
Fill me with your joy.
Give to me that happiness
Nothing can destroy.
Even when my sufferings
Point me to despair,
May I know that joy inside
Just because you're there.

Fill me with your Spirit, Lord, fill me with your peace,
Quieten all the turbulence, bid my struggles cease.
Often my anxieties, fill my life with stress,
Show me how to let them go, give to me your rest.

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A Word from the Territorial Commander (Commissioner Anthony Cotterill)

"As we prepare for another week, may something of the Jesus life live in you and in me, to his glory and praise, and be a blessing to the people we come into contact with"

Closing Song: 'Rejoice, Rejoice' (SASB 389)

Benediction: This is the God we adore (SASB 1041)

This, this is the God we adore, our faithful, unchangeable friend,
Whose love is as great as his power, and knows neither measure nor end.
'Tis Jesus, the first and the last, whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;
We'll praise him for all that is past, and trust him for all that's to come. Amen!
