

Howrah Sandford Weekly Church Bulletin

9th August 2020

SUNDAY SERVICES at St Thomas's Howrah 8.30 and 10 am (both Holy Communion) and St Barnabas's South Arm 10 am (Morning Prayer)

There is also weekly online worship found on the home page of www.stthomashowrah.com

READINGS:

Ephesians 3: 14-19

Psalm 103

Matthew 20: 29-34

SERMON: Prayers of the Bible 3: Paul's prayer for power

Letter-writing is becoming a thing of the past. Snail mail has been replaced by phone calls, emails, facetime, texting, Facebook, Instagram and the list goes on. The Apostle Paul's letters have been the most widely read letters in the world for the last two thousand years. They are full of brilliant, moving and profound thoughts and comments. They were mostly dictated by a scribe while Paul paced back and forth in his prison cell, guest room, inn quarters or ship's cabin. Sometimes his thoughts are hard to follow because Paul was prone to digress. His agile mind was full of thoughts he wanted to get down on paper: sorting out a squabble between two of his friends, bursting into a song of praise, passing on his greetings, clarifying misunderstandings about Jesus, justifying his authority as an apostle. As a result his letters are full of digressions, all of which are worthwhile, but can interrupt his main train of thought. For instance in his Letter to the Ephesians Paul starts a prayer in chapter one which, after numerous digressions, he eventually finishes in chapter three –but the conclusion is worth waiting for.

Paul's prayer for his fellow Christians was that they, "being rooted and established in love, may have power..."

Of course we can all do with more power in our lives:

Physical power: for our body to be strong and pain-free for daily tasks as well as hobbies and exercise

Mental power: to win out over our worries and fears

Financial power: to overcome debt and live comfortably

Social power: to influence others to behave in a particular way

Spiritual power: to get God to bless us or if that sounds too selfish to get God to bless others

But it was none of these types of power that Paul prayed that his fellow Christians to receive. It was the "power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge" Let's seek to grasp the dimensions of Christ's love.

Christ's love is so wide that it extends to all people regardless of race, gender, age or character. In John chapter 1 we hear John the Baptist telling others as Jesus approached them to "Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world".

Christ's love is so long that it goes to any length to reach out to those who are separated from God. In Luke chapter 15 Jesus tells the story of the shepherd rescuing the lost sheep, the woman searching the whole house for the lost coin and the father welcoming back the lost and wayward son.

Christ's love is so high that he enables us to have the most exalted status imaginable – to be God's beloved children who can confidently call him "Father".

Christ's love is so deep that on the cross he confronted the depths of human cruelty, selfishness, fear and guilt. His response to his tormentors was "Father forgive them..."

Paul concludes this magnificent prayer by describing why he prays that we may have the power to grasp the extent of Christ's love. It is so we "may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." This is not knowledge to fill our heads but rather to fill our hearts. The more we experience Christ's love the more we open ourselves to the Holy Spirit transforming us.

CONSIDER:

1. What are the positive effects of being loved?
2. How do you know God loves you?
3. How much does God love you?

4. What effect does it have on you to know that God loves you?

FOR YOUR PRAYERS:

- For the eastern part of our parish: for the Lauderdale Primary School community, one of the largest primary schools in our State, for the clergy and people of Abundant Life Church in Lauderdale, for the residents of the suburbs of Lauderdale, Acton Park, Roches Beach and Seven-Mile Beach
- For the people of Beirut recovering from the disastrous explosion at the port
- For the process of appointing a new Rector for our parish

FROM THE MINISTER:

I want to thank everyone who completed the **surveys** about weekly worship and connect/bible study groups and for the hard work put in by June and Lesley and their respective Task Forces. On that basis Parish Council has decided to continue with online worship and to consider ways of supporting leaders of the various groups that meet in the parish. There was overwhelming support for continuing weekly Sunday morning services at South Arm. There was strong support for a single morning service at Howrah combining elements from both the 8.30 and 10 am services, and for an informal Sunday late afternoon service focussed on young families.

Some of you may be wondering why we don't just implement all these suggestions right now. The opinions and data that have been collected will be very helpful for the new parish council and new minister to set new directions for the future. We are on the threshold of a new era for our parish which will call for the new minister and parish council to engage in some serious strategic planning. Changing services and adopting new programmes without proper strategic planning is getting the cart before the horse.

Annual reports will be emailed next week for you to read prior to the Parish Annual Meeting Sunday 23rd August at 11 am. There will also be printed copies available next Sunday 16th August

Now more than ever it is important to have a keen, committed **leadership team**. Nomination forms for wardens and parish councillors are available. We are looking for a New Treasurer. Serve in a vital role for the ministry and mission of your church. Talk to me, the Wardens Hilary, Barry, Neil or our Acting Treasurer Kate if you are interested or want to know more.

With a new minister soon to be appointed let's get updated and inspired about mission and ministry! **Online Bishop's Training Event** (10am-1pm, Saturday 19 September.) Register at www.bishopstrainingevent.com.

With the love of Jesus
Andrew Lake
0487903363