

The Watford Word

www.watfordchurchofchrist.org

What's on

Friday 6th February, 7:30 pm – next Spiritual Practices group. See Penny or Maggie for details.



Sunday 08 February: Church service. Malcolm speaking on *Philippians 2.12-18*. Our annual church meeting follows the service.

Sunday 15 February: Church service. The lesson will come from our Hong Kong brethren.

Thursday 19 February 08:00 PM: Third Thursday prayer meeting. <https://zoom.us/j/98834309524?pwd=wONcU85ShjGHPjWkjA24icjW3j1gLU.1>

Meeting ID: 988 3430 9524. Passcode: 332426

"May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice." (Psalm 141:2)

Sunday 22 February: Church service. Malcolm speaking on *Philippians 2.19-30*.

Events further ahead

Saturday, 14th March: UK children's ministry training day: London and South

Friday 03rd to 06th April: European International Campus Ministry Conference, Paris, France

Friday 22nd to Sunday 24th May: UK & Ireland mature singles retreat – "Trust In The Lord"

Friday 24th to 27th July: ICCM Preteen Camp

Saturday 25th to Friday 31st July: ICCM Teen Camp

Friday 11th - 13 September: UK & Ireland Young Professionals Retreat in Chesham.

Sept 30th - Oct 04th: Celtic Spirituality Retreat.

Friday 30th October to Sunday 01st November: Autumn Student Retreat for the UK & Ireland.

Thursday 12-15th November: UK, Ireland and Nordics leadership retreat.

Living a Life of Love

Last Sunday we finished our series on the topics of faith, hope and love. I imagine we all desire to live a life of love like Jesus. However, to embrace this calling, we must find inner motivation. Fundamentally, that comes from a deep conviction that we are beloved of God.

Let's spend a few minutes examining what life looks like when we believe we are beloved.¹

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" 1 John 3.1

What difference does it make to your life when you believe you are loved by your heavenly father?

And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (Matthew 3:17; 17:5)

The voice from heaven might have been aimed at those around Jesus, but please don't say it carried no weight for Jesus, too. If it benefitted him to know he was loved, how much more us.

So the question: Who are we to God?

Dearly loved children

"Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children" Ephesians 5.1

Chosen and beloved

"As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience." Colossians 3.12

¹ Based on my notes from a section in Jeanie Shaw's book, "The Inside of the Cup".

What do you notice in these representative passages? I see two key elements.

Firstly, that we are chosen and dearly loved children. God has done this. It is not that we have earned it or deserve it. Our part is to discover his love for us and embrace it.

Secondly, I observe that there are wonderful imperatives in these Scriptures -- to follow the example of God and to clothe ourselves with Christlike qualities.

What do our lives look like when we live from a place of belovedness?

- We look forward to time with our Heavenly Father. Psalm 27.8.
- We assume He has good things for us in His Word. Psalm 119.36.
- We live with hope. Romans 15.13.
- We give our love away because we always receive more from Him than we give. 1 John 4.19.
- We react to criticism with equanimity, seeking the truth in it without taking it as evidence of our unworthiness. Proverbs 9.8-9.
- We treat everyone with respect. 1 Peter 2.17.
- We desire to treat others in such a way that they may feel beloved. John 13.34-35.

Taken together, the outcomes of a love-inspired life sound a lot like living like Jesus.

How do we develop a Christlike life? It all starts with becoming convinced of something. And that something is that we are dearly loved by our heavenly father. If you are unsure if you are loved, if you are uncertain of your acceptance, that is the place to start if you want to be a disciple of Jesus. Don't begin with behaviour, but become convinced you are beloved.

Reflection questions

- When I think about God looking at me, what expression do I imagine on His face?
- Which of the seven outcomes above feels most present in my life right now? Which feels most distant?
- How do I usually respond to criticism or failure, and what might change if I truly believed I was secure in God's love?
- What would it look like this week to live from belovedness?

Conclusion

Belovedness is not a sentimental idea. It is the fertile soil of a Christlike life. When I forget that I am loved, my attempts at a faithful life grow the weeds of effort, anxiety, or comparison. When I remember, obedience becomes a joy.

The invitation of Scripture is not first to do more, but to receive more. To listen again to the voice that says, "You are my beloved child." From that place, a different kind of life takes shape.

Your brother, Malcolm

HOPE Worldwide
Afghanistan



Watford Contribution Details

Church bank account:

Three Counties churches of
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