

## **26<sup>th</sup> April 2020 10am How much are you worth? (Psalm 8:1-5 and 1 Timothy 5:1-3) – Graham Archer**

### **Activity**

[Michelle Harris:]

Well, I'm going to open with a prayer and then we'll get into our activities.

Father God, thank you that you brought us here safely today. Thank you that we can spend this time with you. Father, I ask that today you would help us not to just sit and watch a screen, not to just treat it as something on the telly. Help us to really connect with you, help us to learn something new about who you are, help us to learn something new about who we are in you. Help us to really deepen our relationship with you this morning, through the things that we do, through the words that Graham speaks. And through the prayers that I bring this day. Father, be with us this morning and help us to draw closer to you. Amen.

So, let's start with an activity. What I want you to do is, if you've got your piece of paper, I'd like you to draw a stick person that represents you a little bit. And I want you to have a think about what words God would use to describe you. Not what words you would use to describe yourself, but what words would God use to describe you, and then I want you to write them on your piece of paper around your stick person. And that would be great. Once you've done this, later send me a photo of them. Again, if you send it you can upload it to Facebook or send it to Denise or send it to me directly. But we will get all these pictures put in a montage and then put them up together over the week. But if you could take a photo at the end, that would be great. And so I'm going to write things like I am precious. And the Bible tells me that I am unconditionally loved. And I'm going to write, "I am God's workmanship." And I'm going to write that I am chosen.

Now the Bible tells us loads and loads and loads of things that God thinks about us. They're just a few of them. And I mean, I've got Bible verses that can back all of those things up. And I want you to keep that in your head, whilst we're going through the morning, whilst we're going through this service. Have a think about what else God might say about you and about who you are.

And I know that in our community, we've got some really great poets and some really good wordsmiths. So I thought I'd set you a challenge as well. And again, you can do this over the week, or you can just do it during the service, but to write an acrostic, for the word "WORTH". So for each of those things [letters W O R T H], either one word or sentence or something like that, that tells you about your worth in God. And again, if you can do those and send them in them, that would be fab.

So, doing worship, I've seen that worship on YouTube Live and via Zoom is not the best so we're going to have a time of worship now where we're going to read through a psalm together.

### **Psalm 8:1-5**

<sup>1</sup> LORD, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory  
in the heavens.

<sup>2</sup> Through the praise of children and infants

you have established a stronghold against your enemies,  
to silence the foe and the avenger.

<sup>3</sup> When I consider your heavens,  
the work of your fingers,

the moon and the stars,  
which you have set in place,

<sup>4</sup> what is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care for them?

<sup>5</sup> You have made them a little lower than the angels  
and crowned them with glory and honour.

I'm going to hand over to Rob now, who's going to bring us our reading for the day.

[Rob Harris:]

### **1 Timothy 5:1-3**

<sup>1</sup> Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, <sup>2</sup> older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

<sup>3</sup> Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need.

[Michelle Harris:]

And now I'm going to hand over to Graham, who's going to bring us our word.

### **Talk**

[Graham Archer:]

Well, good morning, everybody. Now, this is the question that I'm wanting to pose this morning: How much are you worth?

You've just drawn a picture of yourself, and you'll have put words around it. But if you were to ask that question of somebody, "How much are you worth?" there's a number of ways that you could begin to answer it. I mean, I suppose one of the most obvious ways of asking the question is, how much money have I got? How much are you worth? Are you a millionaire? Are you a billionaire? Do we have any billionaires in our congregation? Maybe not, but could we say, how much are you worth an answer about money? But then that poses a problem, doesn't it really, because just because someone's a billionaire or a millionaire or penniless, that isn't really a statement of how much they might mean to us.

There's a different way of asking the question how much you're worth: how much are you worth to someone else? And maybe at a birthday party or a wedding or even at a funeral, you might hear people say, "This person means the world to me." And that's nothing to do with pounds, or pence isn't it? It's to do with how much your relationship means. You could answer it a different way as well. You could say, well, it's about how productive I am. Am I a productive person? Does that say something about my worth? Well, we've got two pear trees in the garden, and one of them has got one pear growing on it. And the other one has got about fifty pears growing on it, but they're both the same size. One of them is more productive – it's definitely worth more as a pear tree. But is productivity really what it's all about during this season of COVID? I mean, most of us can't be productive in the way that we used to be, so maybe it's not about productivity. But let's think about that just for a moment, because I

think it's a really important question. Just recently in Christianity Magazine - here's the guy [showing picture] and his name is Matt Dillahunty. And he's a very, very famous atheist, somebody who doesn't believe in God in America. And somebody asked him the question, "What are people worth?" And he said, "I don't think the universe cares at all about human life. Humans have value when they have value to other people." It's like, well, if somebody has value to me, then they're valuable.

Well, this time of COVID isolation is fascinating, isn't it? I read an article the other day that said, "Is there any point to celebrities during lockdown?" Another of the big questions around is "Well, we're paying footballers hundreds of thousands of pounds a week. Are they worth it? They're not even playing!" How do you work out what people are worth? And yet, while we're not paying attention to celebrities or footballers, other people, here's a group here [shows another picture]: this is a group of community health workers. They're not paid much at all, actually, they work in our community, but these are the sort of people that every Thursday we're all getting on our front doorstep and saying, "Hooray! You're brilliant! We love you. We're so glad that you're here. You're worth loads!" What about 90-year-olds? I've got a 96-year-old mother, how much is she worth? Well, this ninety-year-old [Captain Tom Moore] is worth loads, isn't he? He wouldn't be a celebrity except he's been walking up and down his garden and he's raised nearly 30 million pounds for people like these ones [community health workers]. It's all a bit upside down, isn't it? How do you know how much you're worth?

In our short reading this morning, Paul is writing to Timothy to say, "I want you to take good care of the widows." Later on, he talks about slaves and other people who don't seem to be worth so much materially. He says, I want you to value the widows, not because they're rich, because they're not, not because they're loved by their partner because they've lost their partners, not because they're productive - they tend to be older - but because they matter to God. In fact, what he's saying in Timothy are: older men, younger men, children, older women, younger women, I want you to value everybody, because everybody is valuable in the eyes of God.

Let me just briefly say where I get that from. Well, first of all, if you look at the story of creation right at the beginning of the Bible, what you find is that, while everything's good, one thing's very good, and that's where God creates men and women, boys and girls, in His own image. He says, God created them in His image, male and female, He created them. There is something about the fact that the mark of God is in our lives. That's the start of what makes us valuable. When we move on to the Psalm that we read together, it talks about how majestic God is - the heavens and the glory and "From the lips of children and infants you have praise. When I consider the heavens and the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, the big, the beautiful things that are around us, what is man that you're mindful of us? Human beings that you care for us?" And that's quoted later on in the New Testament. God loves human beings. And that makes us incredibly valuable. And when Paul writes to Timothy, he wants to say to Timothy, "Look after the widows look after those who are the poor, who are the weaker, look after everyone, because everyone matters to God."

We're just at the end of the Easter season, aren't we. And anyway, the Easter season is the point where we get this most clearly. You see, Jesus was the most valuable person. He is the Son of God. He can do amazing things. He teaches in amazing ways. He's just incredible. He's the person in the whole of history as the most remembered, the most books are written about and the most stories have been kept about him. In one sense, he is the most valuable. And yet, the cross tells us that he made himself worthless. It was said of his time that anyone who died on the cross was absolutely worthless, meant nothing. People could abuse them and hit them and shout at them, because they meant nothing. And what happens on the cross is that Jesus takes everything that makes us feel that

we're worthless, and destroys it. He becomes the worthless one, in order that you and I might know that we are precious to the Father.

In a moment, we're going to play a hymn. And if you're anything like my mother and you're living on your own, you might want to sing it at the top of your lungs. If you're living with others, maybe you just need to check out with them if you're allowed to! It's a wonderful hymn. It says. "My song is love unknown, my Saviour's love to me. Love to the loveless shown that they might lovely be." So if you ask the question, "How much are you worth?" maybe your instinctive inside reaction is, "Well then, I'm not worth very much, you know, I'm nobody important." You might even say, "Well I used to be somebody really important but I'm not any more." You might think, "I've fallen short," "I wish I'd done better," "I wish I was more this or more that," "I think I missed God's call somewhere" or "I've let myself down," "I've let others down." But you know what, these kind of thoughts are not the final definition, brothers and sisters, of who you are. You are not worthless. You are *loved*. And if any of those negative thoughts have snuck into your head and made you think "Well, other people matter more to God than me. Other people are more valuable," just do not believe them. Have a read, have a listen to this hymn<sup>1</sup>, join in if you can. "Love to the loveless shown." It ends by saying, "This is my friend, Jesus. This is my friend, my friend indeed, in whose sweet praise I [all my days would] gladly spend.

Let me pray for you, and for me, Let's pray.

Father, we do live in a world where we compare ourselves with each other. And sometimes that makes us feel good and sometimes it doesn't. But I thank you Father, that as you look at men and women and boys and girls, the ground is level, that we all have the mark of Christ in us through the way that we were made, and we've all been bought by the precious, precious blood of Jesus. And so, however loveless we might think we are, love has been shown, the world has been turned upside down, and we can serve you from a position of your glory and of your grace.

My song is love unknown,  
My Saviour's love to me;  
Love to the loveless shown,  
That they might lovely be.  
O who am I,  
That for my sake  
My Lord should take  
Frail flesh and die?

He came from His blest throne  
Salvation to bestow;  
But men made strange, and none  
The longed-for Christ would know:  
But O! my Friend,  
My Friend indeed,  
Who at my need  
His life did spend.

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<sup>1</sup> Lyrics: Samuel Crossman, 1664; Tune: "Love Unknown" by John Ireland, 1918 or 1925  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My\\_Song\\_Is\\_Love\\_Unknown](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My_Song_Is_Love_Unknown)

Sometimes they strew His way,  
And His sweet praises sing;  
Resounding all the day  
Hosannas to their King:  
Then "Crucify!"  
is all their breath,  
And for His death  
they thirst and cry.

Why, what hath my Lord done?  
What makes this rage and spite?  
He made the lame to run,  
He gave the blind their sight,  
Sweet injuries!  
Yet they at these  
Themselves displease,  
and 'gainst Him rise.

They rise and needs will have  
My dear Lord made away;  
[A murderer](#) they save,  
The Prince of life they slay,  
Yet cheerful He  
to suffering goes,  
That He His foes  
from thence might free.

In life no house, no home,  
My Lord on earth might have;  
In death no friendly tomb,  
But what a stranger gave.  
What may I say?  
Heav'n was his home;  
But mine the tomb  
Wherein he lay.

Here might I stay and sing,  
No story so divine;  
Never was love, dear King!  
Never was grief like Thine.  
This is my Friend,  
in Whose sweet praise  
I all my days  
could gladly spend.

[Graham Archer:]

What an amazing hymn, and it's because of his great love for us that we can go

to him and talk about absolutely anything that's on our minds.

So Diana is going to lead us in our prayers now.

[Diana Archer:]

I'm going to spend a bit of time in prayer just talking to God. And we're going to start off with some "Thank you" prayers and I'm going to leave a space after each one, so you can add things just for yourself that mean your own conversation with Jesus, what you want to talk to him about, and I'll finish each of those with a "Thank you Father." Then we're going to do some things that we just like to ask him for, that we want to pray for. And then I'll say at the end, "Father in your mercy," and you might like to say in your homes, "Hear our prayer." Again, I'm going to leave a little space so that we can all put in things that are important to us.

So let's pray. Let's talk to God.

Dear Father, we thank you that we can just pause this morning and think about how much we are worth. Thank you for the reminder that we are made in the image of God, we have the mark of God, on us and in us. Thank you, that you love every one of us. Yes, God really does love you. Thank you, Jesus, that you thought we were worth dying for. Thank you that you are always our very best friend.

Thank you, Father.

Thank you that part of that mark of God means that you made us with an amazing capacity to care for each other, to see the worth in each other, and in these strange and different days of the coronavirus, we thank you so much for all the acts of kindness and care that we see all around us. Let's just pause and think about the ones we have seen, experienced or indeed, are giving.

Thank you, Father.

And of course Father, we want to say a massive thank you for our wonderful NHS. We are so grateful for every single person. And we do pray today for all of the doctors and nurses, that you will help them and bless them and keep them safe. Let's just pray now for anyone that we know.

Thank you, Father.

And Father we do pray too for our own families, for our neighbours, and our friends, especially those that we can't physically hug or see just at the moment. And we pray especially for those who are ill or struggling at the moment, because life is different. Let's just pray for them.

Father, in your mercy,  
Hear our prayer.

Father, of course, we want to pray for our world leaders, but especially today we pray for the leaders in our own country. We thank you so much that Boris Johnson recovered from COVID. And we pray for him as he goes back to work. Lord, would you please give him and all those working with him the wisdom to make good and right and the best decisions in a very difficult time.

Let's just pray for that.

Father, in your mercy,  
Hear our prayer.

And Father, I pray too for each one of us, that even today, we might take a step

forward in just enjoying and relaxing into the love that you have for each one of us. We want to let go of the voices that tell us “not good enough” and run to you, see your smile. We thank you that your arms are always wide open to welcome us. We thank you that having church online means that more people are tuning in. And we pray that lots more people will discover just how much they are worth in your eyes and how much you love them.

In Jesus’ name. Amen.

## ***Blessing***

[Graham Archer:]

The final verses of Jude say,

<sup>24</sup> To him who is able to keep you from falling and present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – <sup>25</sup> to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and for evermore!

So Father, according to your great love and your glorious presence, will your blessing rest on each one of us in our different homes. May your blessings rest across Kenilworth, may your blessing somehow be building us up as a community and may your will be done and kingdom come in through our lives. Thank you that you hear our prayers. And you're with us not just now, but even throughout the whole of this day, and the days to come.

Amen.

Have a great day.

[Graham Archer]

[Transcribed by <https://otter.ai> with help from Hamish Blair]

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