

19th July 2020 10 am Transformed!

Service led by Denise Coomber, talk by Roger Homes with Alice & Heather Homes and Chris Waters

Transcript only of notices, talk, reading and subsequent prayers

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Notices

[Denise Coomber:]

Well, good morning, everybody. And welcome to this morning's 10 am worship service at St. John's Church Kenilworth. I'm going to start by getting the notices out of the way. And you should have all been sent one of these, which is our news update. And there are two things on there that I'd like to draw your attention to.

The first is about the church building. And the church building has now been deep-cleaned. And we're looking for volunteers to help open the church building for personal prayer and reflection on Wednesdays from 10 till 2 and Sundays from 11 till 3. So if you're interested in being involved with that, can you please contact Angie Purdom or Gill Palmer and their contact details are on the new sheet. [Note: Angie's landline number is not working at the moment]

And now we've just seen the introductory screen and it had something going across the bottom which said "What is God saying? So after quality time with God, are you pretty sure that God's directing you to reach out to a particular network of people or geographical place or a social need? Or after quality time with God, are you desiring to be used and sent out but you don't really know where you're supposed to be going? If it's either of those, then please let us know because we want to help and support you in the next steps. So as you just contact the church office, admin@stjohn316.co.uk, we'll be able to help you with this."

[Activity and hymn omitted from this transcript]

Talk (including reading of Romans 12:1-2)

[Denise:]

Father, thank You that you can change our lives, You can mould us into whatever you want us to become. So Lord, I pray that you'll help us to have pliable hearts that can be changed by you.

And so now, Lord, as we listen to what Roger has to say to us, I pray that Your Spirit will touch our hearts, that You will speak to us and that You will change us. So Lord, I pray for the words of Roger and Chris and Alice and Heather. Lord, I pray that they will speak to us in the name of Jesus Christ.
Amen.

[Roger Homes:]

Morning, everybody, I hope this finds you well.

One of the issues that seems to have been coming up more and more during this lockdown is people's mental well-being and mental health.

I'm not quite sure how the pandemic has affected you. Maybe you've been unlucky enough to have been furloughed, or even to have lost your job. And you've found yourself with extra time on your hands, which in one sense, could be a good thing. But sometimes people miss the routine that going into work brings. Maybe you're worried about finding another job. How easy is that going to be? Maybe you're a student, whether that be university or school student, and you've found that the lockdown has meant that you've had to get to grips with new ways of working. Maybe you're missing your friends. Maybe you're a parent, and you've had to balance working, doing domestic duties, and also helping to school the children. And maybe you've found yourself being extremely busy and maybe somewhat stressed. All of us, I think, have been affected by not being able to see family and friends during the lockdown. Some of you may have felt somewhat isolated, perhaps you've had to shield during the lockdown. And tragically, maybe there may be some of you that unfortunately have lost loved ones or people that you know during the COVID-19 crisis.

Whatever our circumstances, I think it's fair to say that the pandemic's effects on our mental health and well-being as a society is likely to be felt for some time. So it seemed appropriate to me that it would be good to spend some time looking at what does the Bible have to say about renewing our mind? To help me with this particular talk I've used Joyce Meyers' book, *Renewing the Mind* and also David Holden's book, which is called *Battle for the Mind*. David Holden is someone from New Frontiers.

I'm going to read a passage from Romans 12, which will be familiar to many of you. And then I've asked a couple of people to tell me (or tell us) how they found it during the lockdown. So this is Romans 12, verses 1 to 2. [NIVUK 1984]

¹ Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. ² Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

[Alice Homes:]

Hello, I'm Alice and I'm going to be talking about how I found the lockdown. So at the start, before the lockdown I actually had a job in Coventry, which I did lose due to the pandemic, which was quite unexpected because I hadn't been there long – I'd been there less than a week, so it's about three days, and then they just told me that they couldn't have me at the moment due to the COVID. And then I did find it hard as well, just due to lack of routine after that. So I really haven't felt I'd had anything to get up for. But recently I have been a lot more motivated, due to getting back into my fitness again, and I can see my boyfriend as well and my friends which has been good, and I found that a lot easier to cope with.

[Chris Waters:]

Hi, I'm Chris, a self-employed landscaper. Just thinking about what lockdown's been like for me. I had loads of time off initially, and was able to get my own garden sorted which is good. Three teenagers living at home – that's been quite tricky. They have all got on really well though – they love each other, so it's really made me glad.

I think it's emphasised what I've already got. And it's made me really thankful living in a nice area and having a nice garden. I've really felt for people, like, say, living in a block of flats and stuff like that.

Just over the last few days, especially, I've really missed people even more. I think the dynamic of lots of people meeting together and kind of like singing the things – it's made me think a lot about that. And then the Bible even says, "Don't give up meeting together," and obviously for lots of good reasons.

But yeah, it is what it is, and I'm sure we'll get through this.

[Roger:]

In the first section I want to talk about reality versus attitude.

And very often our battle is not with our circumstances, but with our thinking. Some doctors estimate that as much as 75% of their patients have physical illness as a product of their mind.

We can sometimes lose our vision of what God wants for us in the routine of everyday life. Now, our minds are funny things, aren't they? They can get cluttered by a whole load of very random thoughts, worries about what other people will think about us, fears about the future.

It is interesting in Numbers 13 that eleven spies believed the Canaanites were too strong for them, that they were giants and in comparison, the Israelites were like grasshoppers. But one, Caleb¹, believed they could actually take the land that God promised them. Now the circumstances were the same, but their attitudes were very different.

Jeremiah 31 and verse 33 [NIVUK 1984] says,

‘This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel
after that time,’ declares the LORD.
‘I will put my law in their minds
and write it on their hearts.
I will be their God,
and they will be my people.’

Now, sometimes I can think that I'm undeserving of God's grace, thinking perhaps of the things that I've done in the past. But in fact, you know, we're all unworthy. And instead of dwelling on myself and my own circumstances, what I need to do is lift up my head, and focus instead on God Himself. I think praising God is one thing that we can do that can help us to do this. Maybe that might mean listening to some worship songs or maybe reading an uplifting bit of Scripture.

One the phrases I've heard mentioned in the past is that when the devil reminds you of your past, remind him of his future.

Tiredness, I think, can be a cause of confusion as well. Now, sometimes I get a little bit peopled-out. Perhaps more recently, you may have felt a little bit Zoomed-out, and you can't cope with another Zoom. It's good to find something that relaxes us. For me, that's going running, I find that releases me both bodily and in terms of my mind as well. And that's often when I hear God's voice speaking to me.

God offers peace in spite of the chaos and the confusion that is going on around us. He won't necessarily take us out of the circumstances, but He will help us to cope in them.

Jesus faced a lot of opposition, but was able to find a place of peace with God in spite of that.

1 and also Hoshea/Joshua – see Numbers 14:6-9

Now Heather's going to come and give us a brief testimony, how God helped her in her particular struggles.

[Heather Homes:]

So we as a country have been through challenging times at the moment, but we're continually reminded that COVID is with us and here to stay, and it's a new normal. Times have changed really quickly and many people don't know if they will still have jobs after the lockdown, and if they'll catch COVID. So there's quite a few things to be anxious about.

So, in most of my life, I spent being really anxious about everything. I used to worry about everything I could think of, and actually it wore me out and made me feel quite unwell on many occasions.

I started to seek for ways I could get rid of my anxiety. I tried counselling, hypnotherapy and medication. And they did all play a small part in helping me but really didn't change the habit that had formed in me from quite a young age. Eventually, I resolved myself to the fact that this is how I was and I just need to live with anxiety - until the age of 22. I asked God into my life. I thought, "What have I got to lose? I could give God a go." I just simply asked God to come into my life and to help me live His ways.

I then came across some quite challenging Scripture in the Bible. So in Philippians 4, verse 6, [NIVUK 1984] it says,

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

So what was God saying? Was He telling me not to worry, or be anxious about anything? That's going to be impossible. I still had the potential to be anxious and to worry about things. But actually when I read the Scriptures about not being anxious I almost felt as if God was then speaking to me. So that really, really helped me with my anxiety even when I became a Christian.

Now, I actually lost my job over lockdown, which has really saddened me. And I do need to find some other work. But you know, I'm not going to worry about it. And there's no point being anxious about it. Because what I do now, when I get anxious, is I pray to God and ask God for guidance, and ask God to help me. And I ask God, "What is the next step in my life?" So, really, my attitude and my mindset towards anxiety and worry is completely changed. Because I now trust in God for my life, and I actually have a relationship with Jesus. So what if, instead of "the virus is here to stay and social distancing is a new normal," what if it was changed to "Jesus is here to stay." And I'm going to use a bit of Scripture here 1 Peter 5:7, it says

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

and draw close to Him and make it the new normal.

So can I encourage you today to take courage in whatever situation you're in? Whatever anxieties you may have, and actually ask God to come into your life and to help you. You know, God is consistent and continual. And He'll always, always be with us. The Bible says He will never leave us or forsake us. Now, I hope that's really helped you today, because I would say that God continues to help me in my life. And we still have struggles at times. We still have the temptation to be anxious, but I would say having God in my life has taught me to trust in Him, to know His peace. Thank you.

[Roger:]

Thank you, Heather. I've called my second section "being more like Jesus."

And the Bible tells us that before we knew Christ, our minds were depraved. Romans 1 verse 28 [NIVUK 1984]:

²⁸ Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.

It's interesting, isn't it, they don't have to train children to argue. They seem to do it quite naturally. When our two, when they were young, I remember them fighting over a sweet wrapper once, one of the shiny sweet wrappers like Quality Street, and of course at the end of the day that went in the bin.

But now, we're told that we are a new creation. The old is gone, the new has come. And I picked up some quotes from Sermon Central from the internet. And the first bit is, it says

The mind is like a farmer's field. If a farmer plants corn, he'll get corn. If he plants wheat, he'll get wheat. It was stupid for the farmer to plant corn and then expect to harvest wheat. It is simple. Whatever you plant is what you get. If you sow to the flesh, you will reap corruption. It is impossible for any person to sow to flesh and get a spiritual harvest. God has given you the ability to control what you sow, and thereby control what you harvest.

Once we give our lives to Christ, God begins a process of transformation, which includes our minds. Colossians 3 versus 1 to 3 [NIVUK 1984] says,

¹ Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

A little bit later on, in the same bit from Sermon Central, it says,

It is easy to see why many Christians remain powerless. No person's mind can be renewed on a starvation diet. The mind cannot be renewed on a junk food diet, like trashy movies, TV shows and novels. The reason why so many Christians do not experience transformation is they become what they think and much of what they think is not becoming. They spend more time watching things of the devil and the world than reading things of the Spirit. Our attitudes and behaviour are but a reflection of what goes into our minds.

I think there's a challenge there for us about how do we spend our money or our time rather, what do we feed our minds with? What do we watch? What do we listen to? What do we read?

If we are to be changed to be more like Jesus, we must first learn to think like Him. And this affects our attitudes and our character. 2 Corinthians 10, verse 5 tells us,

take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

1 Corinthians 2, verse 16, says that we have the mind of Christ, which means that we have it already. And I was trying to think about what does that actually mean? To say that we have the mind of Christ? Well, these are some suggestions I've got for that:

- To put God first.
- To see people the way God sees them.
- To turn the other cheek on occasions.
- To give and not expect anything back.
- To always seek the best in people.
- To love others unconditionally, and
- To show humility.

And finally, the last part from Sermon Central says this:

Renewing our minds is the key to growing as a Christian. It's the difference between being conformed to this world and being transformed into a new creation. Because the mind controls life and behaviour. Without the renewal of your mind, you'll simply stay conformed to this world. You will be no different from the unsaved, your witness for Christ will fail to have any credibility. In Jesus' words, you'll be salt that's lost its flavour. The Word tells us to have the mind of Christ.

Finally, then, by way of conclusion, Abraham Lincoln said that most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.

You know, we're always going to have some unpleasant or difficult people to deal with. But it's our attitude and not theirs that determines our level of happiness.

When I look back I think, "Well, God's always been faithful in the past. I can trust Him to be faithful in the future as well." Now, when we look back, we can see how He's been leading us. The blessings that we have received, the victories that have been won, the encouragement that we've had, and we can be confident for the future.

The children of Israel wandered around in the desert for 40 years, always moaning about their current state of affairs, and forgetting how God had answered their prayers, and delivered them from oppression in Egypt, and provided food and sustenance for them and met their daily needs. I don't know about you, but I don't want to spend 40 years wandering around in circles.

Matthew 22, verses 35 to 40 says this.

³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

³⁷ Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

And then finally, some verses from well known verses from Isaiah, chapter 14 [verses 30 and 31].

³⁰ Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;

³¹ but those who hope in the LORD
will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.

Let's finish with a word of prayer.

Father, I want to thank You for Your mercy and for Your grace to us. Thank You that we have the mind of Christ. I pray You'd help us to see others the way that You see them.

Help us, Lord, to be wise, the things that we listen to, the things that we watch the things that we read.

Help us be more like Jesus, allowing You to continue the process of transformation in us by the renewing of our minds.

We pray this now, the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

We'll hope that's been helpful. Hopefully we will be able to see each other in the not too distant future. I wish you all the best. God bless for now. Bye bye.

Prayerful Response

[Denise:]

Thank you, Roger. There's a lot to listen to in that and a lot to take into our heads. My mind is a little bit distracted because the other spy that went into Canaan and came back with a good report, Joshua, has been in hospital for the past day or so. Our son has had his appendix removed. So the devil was trying to distract us from what we're supposed to be doing. And so, and because I'm leading this service, that seemed to be quite a huge distraction. But we have taken captive our thoughts and we have let the peace of Christ reign in our hearts over this situation. And thank you for your prayers.

Let's just sit in a little bit of quiet and think about some of the things that Roger has been saying to us about not being anxious and renewing our mind and then we'll go into a time of prayer.

Father, thank You, that You want to change us to be more like You.

Thank You that You have provided a way through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, so that we can be brought back into Your presence and have our sins forgiven.

Thank You that You have brought us from death to life, from darkness to light. You have taken us from slavery to sin, and given us freedom through Your grace and love to serve You.

Thank You that You have changed our mourning into joy and despair into hope.

And thank You that You can change our hearts and minds so that we will know Your will for our lives.

Lord, we bring you our worries and anxieties.

Please bring before the Lord those people that you know are ill and lost their jobs, that are mourning and that just need a little bit of prayer cover this morning.

[Rest of intercessions omitted in this version]

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

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