

## 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2020 6pm Agape Meal

Service led by Andrew Attwood with Lindsey Attwood, talk by Andrew Attwood, personal reflection by Felicity Hawke, liturgy led by Charlie and Gill Palmer

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### **Greeting**

[Andrew:] Good evening. Good to see you all.

[Felicity:] Hi.

[Charlie:] Hi.

[Andrew:] Welcome everybody, it's another 6pm service. We've got some other folks with us tonight. Good to see Charlie and Gill, good to see Felicity. This is going to be an Agape meal, which I'll describe in a minute. I just want to check in though. Are you guys well?

[Felicity, Charlie:] Yes thanks, fine.

[Gill:] Beautiful day today.

[Andrew:] Oh yes, it's a little bit nippy this week I think, it's going to be a bit chilly, so maybe the season's changing.

[Felicity:] Hmm, yes.

### **Introduction**

[Andrew:] Anyway, I'll have one minute to explain the service, then I'm going to hand over to Charlie, so I can see you in a minute. So, this service, folks, is going to be an Agape meal. And what that's going to include is some words of thanksgiving. And then we're going to move into some words to deal with God's forgiveness, we'll have an opportunity to hear God's word, and I'll do a fairly short talk relating to something that Jesus says around the Last Supper, then Felicity is going to kindly share with us some personal thoughts to do with Christ's death and resurrection from her own point of view, and then Lindsey will join me and with all of us together, we will break bread and drink wine to remember what Christ has done. And again, we'll have another section where we remember the Resurrection, and what that means to us, and then we'll finish with blessing. And there'll be two songs mixed into all of this, so I do hope that this helps. I'm now going to hand over to Charlie, as he leads us in the first section of this Agape meal. So, over to you Charlie.

### **Words of Thanks for God's plan of Salvation**

[Charlie:]

So we begin by giving thanks to our God.

Thank You, Lord, for Your infinite wisdom and Your infinite grace, as demonstrated in the plan of salvation. Thank You for bringing us into communion with You through Your wonderful, redeeming work.

We praise You, Father, for sending Your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ to come to this earth and to be born into the human race, over two thousand years ago, so that by His death and resurrection we might be able to look to Him as our Rescuer.

**Lord, we believe.**

Thank You that Jesus Christ is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him.

We praise You that He continues to intercede for us, and His grace keeps us in relationship with You, our God.

**Lord, we believe.**

Thank You, Father, that the Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God. Thank You that we have been adopted into Your family through the work of Your Son.

We praise You that we can be assured of our inheritance of eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns in unity with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

**Lord, we believe.**

In Jesus' name we pray.

**Amen**

### ***Hymn: And Can It Be***

1. And can it be that I should gain  
An interest in the Saviour's blood?  
Died He for me, who caused His pain?  
For me, who Him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! How can it be  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

} x 2

2. 'Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies!  
Who can explore His strange design?  
In vain the firstborn seraph tries  
To sound the depths of love divine!  
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,  
Let angel minds inquire no more.

} x 2

3. He left His Father's throne above,  
So free, so infinite His grace;  
Emptied Himself of all but love,  
And bled for Adam's helpless race.  
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;  
For, O my God, it found out me.

} x 2

4. Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
My chains fell off, my heart was free;  
I rose, went forth and followed Thee.

} x 2

5. No condemnation now I dread;  
Jesus, and all in Him is mine!  
Alive in Him, my living Head,  
And clothed in righteousness divine,  
Bold I approach the eternal throne,  
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

} x 2

## **Remembering God's forgiveness**

[Gill:]

And now we remember that God is a forgiving God.

"You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you." <sup>1</sup>

"Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered." <sup>2</sup>

"As far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed our transgressions from us." <sup>3</sup>

Jesus says, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' <sup>4</sup>

In a moment of quiet, let us reflect on our lives before God, bringing to Him whatever needs to be confessed.

So as a community, let us turn away from our sin and turn to Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

**All Lord God,  
we have sinned against you;  
we have done evil in your sight.  
We are sorry and repent.  
Have mercy on us according to your love.  
Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.  
Renew a right spirit within us  
and restore us to the joy of your salvation;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

May the Father of all mercies  
cleanse *us* from *our* sins,  
and restore *us* in his image  
to the praise and glory of his name,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All Amen.**

## **Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26: The Last Supper**

**23** For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." **25** In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." **26** For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

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1 Psalm 86:5

2 Psalm 32:1

3 Psalm 103:12

4 Matthew 3:2, no particular translation

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### ***Remembering Christ's New Covenant***

And now it's over to Andrew.

[Andrew:]

Thank you Gill. Thank you, Charlie, and welcome to everyone. It's good to have you here. And it's good to have you here so I can do this brief talk with regards to the New Covenant.

You would have heard these familiar words from Corinthians that give us our framework for how we usually celebrate with bread and wine, and I wanted to focus particularly on the New Covenant that Jesus establishes with us as His followers.

Covenants are God's way of establishing in a crystal-clear way His promises and His agreements. Covenants have a kind of a job to do. Covenants reveal what God is like, and covenants also reveal what human beings are like. Now, the New Covenant of Jesus reveals fully what God is like in the light of what we've now discovered human beings are like. Let me give you a perhaps more obvious image when we think of covenants. When we think of wedding rings, and when we think of wedding vows, that's pretty close to what we in the West and around the world we still do in terms of covenants: we make promises publicly, and we wear an emblem that says, "I mean this to the end of my days." Covenants have that kind of gravity, that kind of weight in terms of expressing the heart of things.

And so it was with the earlier covenants. I'm going to just make brief reference to Abraham's covenant and Moses' covenant. You may remember back in Genesis, Genesis 15, in Abraham's covenant, God asked him, after promising various things to him, that He should lay out a set of animals as they used to do in tribal times. And God appeared at the far end of this line of dead animals. And Abraham was put to sleep. And God in the form of fire moved in between. So this presence of death was a sign and a symbol within God's promise to Abraham, that he would be chosen by God to be a blessing to all nations, and God unilaterally chooses Abraham.

Then you have Moses' covenant. And this is where Moses takes the people out of Egypt, and leads them up towards Sinai, and the covenant of the Law is given, and around the base of the mountain [Moses] comes down to the people, and he reads, all the way through to chapter 24 in Exodus, the words of the Law. And he says to the people, "This is the word, this is the Law of our God," and they all make a big promise and say, "and we will keep it." And Moses sprinkles the people with blood. So once again, death, and this time blood, is very much part of covenant language.

The reason why death and blood are so associated with covenant is because when we're dealing with a holy God, something has to die if something has to be restored. It's just how things have been since the beginning with God. Death came into the world because of human brokenness, and it's still part of the symbol language of God, when He's trying to put things right.

So, in the light of that, we now have Christ's covenant. And this time, it's of a Passover supper. In Paul's letter there, he was reminding the Christians of Corinth that Jesus gathered together people, and He had bread and He had wine, but remember, this was in the presence of a sacrificed lamb. Jesus and His disciples would have had a lamb to eat at this Passover supper. Again, death in

the presence of a covenant, and this time with the New Covenant, it's broken bread and it's poured-out wine. Christ knew that through the story of Israel, that the depth of God's love would need to go further than the Law of Moses. Christ knew that through the failures of Israel, that the Law profoundly had revealed that the depth of human brokenness and fallenness was irreparable in terms of human ability. He knew that the Law was good, but it had to go further, He would have to go further. And so He knew that God was going to restore people when He was lifted up. And so at that Last Supper He lifts up wine, He lifts up bread, as a sign of saying, "I am going to be lifted up. I am going to be the New Covenant," and it's going to be His blood that will be poured out, not carcasses, not the blood of the Law with Moses, this is now the New Covenant blood. In fact, it's God's own blood. Only God's blood reveals God's full love. Only God's blood covers the brokenness of humanity and so this covenant is the final covenant.

I just wanted to make a point though, that also at that Last Supper, you had an intriguing exchange that particularly involved Peter. And this is where it really hits hard for those of us who are Christians. Peter, one of the earliest chosen disciples, had had three whole years following Jesus. And right up to this point Peter is declaring his allegiance to God, and he says, "I will go with you to the end, I will go, even if it costs my life." And Jesus turns to Peter and says, "You will lay your life down for me? You're going to deny me." And this is the very Peter who takes bread and drinks wine from Jesus. Jesus knows that the people of Israel couldn't keep the Law, and even Peter, after three full years with the Messiah, was still going to falter, was still going to trip up. This is a fullest revelation of how broken human beings are. Only Jesus, only the blood of the Cross can put things right.

So, the nature of this final New Covenant is that it is the final word, where there is nothing further to say. It's indelible, it's eternal, it fully reveals the face of God. And this face is crowned with thorns. It reveals later through His Resurrection a fully vindicated Christ, it reveals full payment for sin. It reveals extraordinary guarantees of the gift of the Spirit, and the assurance of our salvation. So I just want to encourage people to be honest with themselves about how much we treasure and need this New Covenant. It is so precious to us. It is so valuable and is irreplaceable. This is the last, final covenant, and it works.

### ***Personal story: What Christ's Death and Resurrection Means to Me***

So with that in mind, I'm going to hand over now to Felicity who can share just a few words as to what this all means to her.

[Felicity:]

Thanks Andrew. What does Christ's crucifixion and resurrection mean to me? If I'm honest, it's not something I think about very often, and I'm not sure I've ever tried to articulate it before. I'm not good at analysing the theology behind my faith and I find the whole idea of sacrifice and Jewish custom and all the blood that Andrew has just been talking about, it's very hard to come to terms with. It's something from a long time ago and it seems like a very different culture. But nevertheless, it should be central to my faith, so having considered a bit more since Andrew asked me to say something on the subject, here my fairly brief thoughts.

Crucifixion was a particularly awful and painful death used by the Romans, and the idea of someone willingly offering to go through it seems incredible. And for someone to suffer it in this way when they were actually totally blameless is even more extraordinary. But it is possible to imagine that someone might do it for their friends or their family, if it was going to save them from having to go through it, rather like people sometimes took the place of people destined for the gas chambers in the concentration camps. But to do it, not just for

them, not just for the people close to you, but for countless people far into the future, to prevent us all from having to pay the penalty for our sins, that's very hard to get our heads around. But that's what the Bible says Christ is doing. I can't honestly say it makes me feel wonderfully liberated from a burden, as some would certainly say. I know there are many people who, as part of their testimony, will say that the reality of the Crucifixion and that Jesus died for them suddenly made them feel that a great burden had been lifted off them. But I think it does shout about God's love for the people He created, for all of us. And the length that He's prepared to go to, to save us, and to forgive us from our sins. I can't claim to understand it, and what it really means. But I know I can be grateful.

As to the Resurrection, I see that as hope for the future, fulfilment of a promise that death is not the end, and that we'll not have to put up with the imperfections and pains that we suffer now. It's as if Christ has put down a marker to say, "This is what you can look forward to. This is how things will be in the future. And this is the start of how things are now." I have no idea how or what Heaven will look like or what it will feel like, but as I said to someone years ago, if we believe that God loves us and wants the best for us, then I'm happy to trust that whatever the Resurrection is and however it comes about, it will be the best thing ever.

And so back to Andrew.

### ***Remembering His Sacrifice: Bread and Wine/Juice***

[Andrew:] Thank you so much for that, Felicity, it's always good to hear a personal perspective on this. Lindsey's joined me now. And so I just want to encourage everyone who's who's engaging with this service, if you do have bread and wine of your own, now is the opportunity to have them to hand. And we're just going to spend a moment of quiet now, maybe just a minute of being still, as we prepare and think about what Christ has done for us, particularly focusing on His sacrifice. So let's just be still for a moment.

[Lindsey:]

"Walk in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." <sup>5</sup>

Thank You, Jesus, that, like Felicity was saying, sometimes it's hard to understand or comprehend exactly what You've done, and sometimes it's over a lifetime You reveal more and more of what it means, and that You really did love us so much, and that when we drink of You, and when we eat the bread, we are literally feeding on You. It's not just following a philosophy. We're actually following a person and not just following but actually, Jesus wants us to eat and drink what You, who You are, so that we become like You, so that we ourselves can be love to others, and then sometimes sacrifice for others. So I just pray we receive You, Jesus, and let let You feed us. Let us take the nourishment that You have for us. In Jesus' Name.

[Andrew:] Amen.

[Lindsey:] Amen.

[Andrew:] So now if we can take the bread. So we remember back to that first supper that Jesus had with His disciples<sup>6</sup>, where He took bread. And He named it and He said, This bread is going to be broken for you, and He shared it with them. Christ's Body broken for you.

[Lindsey:] Jesus' body broken for you, Andrew, as well.

[Andrew:]

And we do pray, Jesus, that You would continue to feed us.

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5 Ephesians 5:2 [ESV]

6 See Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20

And when Christ at that Last Supper took the wine, it symbolised the blood that was going to be spilled for the sins of the world, the New Covenant in His blood. So, Lindsey, the Blood of Christ.

[Lindsey:] Andrew, Jesus' blood shed for you.

[Andrew:] Amen. So once again, maybe a minute of quiet, to feed on Christ and to drink Him in.

[Lindsey:] Just as you're being still, this is a verse from Hebrews 10 verses 12 to 14 [ESV]. And it says,

**12** But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, **13** waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. **14** For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

[Andrew:]

So Lord, would you help us to treasure even these great mysteries that we can never fully comprehend. We thank You for the bread, we thank You for the wine. And we thank You for your death, and for Your Resurrection, Jesus. Amen.

I'm going to hand back to [Charlie and] Gill now, who can lead us with more thoughts and prayers.

### ***Resurrection Life***

[Charlie:]

So now we remember that Christ is risen, and His power is available to us who believe.

**1** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. **2** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. **3** For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, **4** in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.  
[Romans 8:1-4, ESV]

*Please spend one minute silently asking the Holy Spirit to take the throne in your life and transform every part of you.*

[Gill:]

We pray that we would know Christ, risen from the dead, and know the power of His Resurrection.

We have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer us who live, but Christ who lives in us; and the life we now live in the body we live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us. [adapted from Gal. 2:20, ESV]

*Please spend one minute enjoying the reality of Christ's living presence, and allow His Resurrection power to renew you again.*

[Charlie:]

So we commit ourselves into your hands, Lord, trusting in Christ's death for us, and living in His glorious life.

In Jesus' name,  
**Amen.**

And back to you, Andrew.

### ***Last thought***

[Andrew:]

Thank you so much, Charlie, thank you, Gill. We are nearing the end of this simple Agape meal now. I do hope that you've enjoyed it. One of the things I wanted to leave with you as a thought through the week, not just on weekends, particularly at this unusual time with lockdown and with COVID: Lindsey and I have occasionally thought that we need to break bread and drink wine more normally and frequently at home, maybe over a meal. This service is called an Agape meal, because the early church shared bread and wine, as part of their eating times. So I want to leave it with you to not worry about formal words or anything, but as a way of drawing close to Christ, particularly at these unusual times. If you wish to take some bread, and some wine and pause for a moment to remember Christ, then please do so.

### ***Blessing***

Let me finish with some words of blessing, and then we'll have a final song.

So Lord Jesus, we are so grateful for what You have done.

Lord Jesus, we are so grateful for what You have done that we could not do. And we trust in Your death, we trust in Your Cross and we thank You for the abiding presence of Your Holy Spirit poured out, giving us a taste of Resurrection life.

Lord, would you continue to be with us through this week, over these days, to come and help us to live in your Resurrection power.

In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

### ***Song: He Will Hold Me Fast***

So we finish with a song.

1. When I fear my faith will fail, Christ will hold me fast;  
When the tempter would prevail, He will hold me fast.  
I could never keep my hold through life's fearful path;  
For my love is often cold; He must hold me fast.

*Chorus:*

He will hold me fast, He will hold me fast;  
For my Saviour loves me so, He will hold me fast.

2. Those He saves are His delight, Christ will hold me fast;  
Precious in His holy sight, He will hold me fast.  
He'll not let my soul be lost; His promises shall last;  
Bought by Him at such a cost, He will hold me fast.

*Chorus*

3. For my life He bled and died, Christ will hold me fast;  
Justice has been satisfied; He will hold me fast.  
Raised with Him to endless life, He will hold me fast  
'Till our faith is turned to sight, When He comes at last!

*Chorus x 2*



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

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