

Additional material – CrossReach and Social Care Sunday

Sunday 3 November 2024

The Faith Action Programme would like to thank Rev Douglas Hamilton, Vice Convener of CrossReach, for his reflections on the lectionary passages and prayers for this CrossReach and Social Care Sunday.

You will also find links to further resources that you can use as part of your worship this week.

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Mark 12:28-34

When the scribe approached Jesus to ask about the greatest commandment in this week's gospel reading, he already knew the answer he was looking for. The greatest commandment is love – love for God and love for others. These were not new commands that Jesus had come up with, but ancient, foundational commandments that underpinned all the other commands that were set out in the Torah.

The scribe understood that this was much more important than all the rituals and festivals that dominated so much of their religious practice and religious debates. I picture the scribe as one who was constantly getting frustrated with their colleagues in the synagogue as they debated the finer details of morality, purity laws and Sabbath observance. I can imagine the scribe regularly appealing to the other scribes, reminding them that they needed to see all these other issues through the lens of love.

When it comes to anything to do with understanding God, or figuring out how to live a life pleasing to God, Jesus agreed that the starting point is always love. We move from there to try and make sense of everything else. Love is the starting point because love is the essence of the character of God.

Hebrews 9:11-14

The writer to the Hebrews would have been able to debate the finer details of the laws of sacrifice with any of the scribes. They would have recognised the importance of these laws as part of maintaining the covenant with God, but the ultimate act of love at Calvary meant that things had changed forever. A new covenant was in place as a result of the blood of Christ. It was love that took Jesus to the cross. God's love for humanity is a sacrificial love.

Psalm 146

God's love is also demonstrated through justice. In Psalm 146 we read of God's love for the righteous and particular concern for the poor, the humble and the oppressed.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and Psalm 119:1-8

Sacrifice and justice are not the words that tend to be accompanied by flowers, chocolates, and a Hallmark card. The love that we read of in the Bible requires perseverance. Love requires a conscious decision to love, and a commitment to keep on loving. That is what is

implied by loving God with 'all our heart'. Loving with 'all our soul' is about our very being. Loving with 'all our strength' is about loving with all of our abilities and resources. The foundational command in Deuteronomy is driven more by will than emotion. If we are to be like the person in Psalm 119 who seeks God with our whole heart and keep God's decrees, then we will start by loving God and loving others.

[Ruth 1:1-18](#)

If sacrifice and justice are aspects of God's love then these should be displayed in our love for others. The passage from Ruth provides an example of what this can look like in practice. In the context of extreme hardship, tragedy and loss, Ruth is prepared to sacrifice the hope of a better future in order to show love to her mother in law. Naomi is weak and vulnerable, but Ruth is prepared to do whatever it takes to support her through the difficulties that she will face.

Love underpins all the lectionary readings this week, just as it underpins the overall message of the Bible. This is the same love that underpins the work of CrossReach across all of our services. We offer loving care to people of all ages who need a helping hand, and support them to live life to the full, whatever their circumstances. Everything we do in CrossReach is driven by a desire to follow the greatest commandment – to love God and to love others.

As you read through the stories of the people who use CrossReach services, look at them through the lens of love. As we think about what dominates the religious practice and debate of our Church, consider what is most important.

On Social Care Sunday we have the opportunity to put love at the centre of our worship. We can give thanks for the way that our Church lives out the greatest commandment through the work of CrossReach, and pray for those who deliver our services. We can pray that more people will experience this love, and that love will overflow into the families and wider communities that surround our services. We can also seek to [share the love](#) by finding ways for our local churches to work together with CrossReach through fundraising and active involvement with services.

As we ask questions about the future of our Church locally and nationally, we already know the answer starts with love, and it is from there that we will seek to make sense of everything else.

Prayers

The following are some suggestions to help us to pray for the people and work of CrossReach.

- Give thanks and praise for the way that God is changing lives through the work of CrossReach. Thank God for the love that is shown to us and that we are able to share God's love with all we come into contact with.
- Pray for the most vulnerable members of our society who come to CrossReach for help. In situations that are very challenging, pray that the light of Jesus will shine brightly to bring hope and take away fear.
- In the context of a challenging public funding climate for Social Care, pray for those individuals and their families who are affected by changes to services. Pray that those who have to make difficult decisions about finances will be guided by wisdom and compassion.
- Give thanks for all the staff who have recently joined CrossReach. Pray that they will feel a sense of welcome and belonging to their teams, and that they will be well supported in their new roles. Pray that current vacancies will be filled and that the right people will be drawn to come and work with us.
- Give thanks for all those who donate, fundraise and support the work of CrossReach in other ways. Pray that more people will hear about the work of CrossReach and be inspired to get involved too.

Musical suggestions

- CH4 123 – “God is love: let heaven adore him”
- CH4 448 – “Lord, the light of your love is shining”
- CH4 519 – “Love divine, all loves excelling”
- CH4 622 – “We sing a love that sets all people free”

Resources

Below are links to some resources that you might like to use as part of your gathering.

A message from Rt Rev Dr Shaw Paterson, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland: <https://youtu.be/Kr3RRsNoHdA?si=R0RMCIK2kPeNcIX0>

Additional CrossReach resources can be found here:

<https://flipbooks.crossreach.org.uk/SupporterResources24>

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