



Chet Valley Churches

All Together Worship



Valentine's Day

14th February 2021

Introduction:

No-one really knows how St Valentine came to be associate with lovers. Saint Valentine was a Catholic priest who had also worked as a doctor. He lived in Italy during the third century AD and served as a priest in Rome. Valentine became famous for marrying couples who were in love but couldn't get legally married in Rome because Emperor Claudius II, outlawed weddings. He wanted to recruit lots of men to be soldiers and thought that marriage would be an obstacle.

When the Emperor discovered that Valentine was performing weddings, he sent Valentine to jail. Here Valentine befriended his jailer, Asterious, who asked Valentine to help his daughter, Julia, with her lessons. A friendship between them blossomed. The Emperor also came to like Valentine and offered to pardon him and set him free if he would renounce his Christian faith and agree to worship the Roman gods. Valentine refused and his faithful choices cost him his life.

Before he was killed, Valentine wrote a last note to encourage Julia to stay close to Jesus and to thank her for being his friend. He signed the note: "From your Valentine." That note inspired people to begin writing their own loving messages to people on Valentine's Feast Day, February 14th, which is celebrated on the same day on which Valentine was martyred.

It is a good thing to celebrate the love that people have one for another. And now on Valentine's Day people give not only cards, but presents maybe flowers or chocolates, or they have a nice meal together.

Today we are thinking about love and so we sing our opening hymn:

Hymn: Come Down O Love Divine

**Come down, O Love divine,
Seek thou this soul of mine,
And visit it with thine own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near, within my heart appear,
And kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.
O let it freely burn, 'til earthly passions turn
To dust and ashes in its heat consuming;
And let thy glorious light shine ever on my sight,
And clothe me round, the while my path illuming.
Let holy charity mine outward vesture be,
And lowliness become mine inner clothing:
True lowliness of heart,
Which takes the humbler part,
And o'er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.
And so the yearning strong,
With which the soul will long,
Shall far outpass the power of human telling;
For none can guess its grace, till he become the place
Wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.**

The Christian notion of love is that there is a bit more to it than chocolates and flowers! Perhaps St Paul summed it up best in the famous words he wrote to the Corinthians:

Reading: Corinthians 13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions,

and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Paul's words about love are a high ideal to live up to and we often fail to make the mark. Today's Collect doesn't pull any punches:

Collect

Holy God, you know the disorder of our sinful lives:
Set straight our crooked hearts,
And bend our wills
To love your goodness and your glory
In Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.



Confession based on 1 Corinthians 13

God of Love, we confess that we are sometimes impatient; we are sometimes unkind; we are quick to envy; we find subtle ways to boast.

Loving God, **teach us to love.**

God of Love, we confess that there are times when we are rude; times when we lift ourselves up and put others down. We are quickly angered; and quick to record how often we've been wronged.

Loving God, **teach us to love.**

God of Love, we confess that we sometimes celebrate the misfortune of others; and there are times when we put ourselves first. We're reluctant to give and slow to sacrifice. There are times we hesitate to protect others.

Loving God, **teach us to love.**

When we are tempted to judge others and assume the worst...

May love remind us to trust.

When we are tempted to despair and assume that all is lost...

May love remind us to hope.

When we are tempted to give up and assume it will never happen...

May love remind us to persevere.

Loving God, **teach us to love.**

Absolution

May the God of love and power
forgive *you* and free *you* from your sins,
heal and strengthen *you* by his Spirit,
and raise *you* to new life in Christ our Lord.
Amen.



♪ Gloria: Round

**Gloria, Gloria in Excelsis Deo.
Gloria! Gloria! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

Love—it isn't all soft, fluffy, and romantic. Love can be tough.

📖 Reading Mark 12:28-31

One of the Scribes asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

That's quite hard—always to love our neighbour. It takes time and effort. For example, ringing up someone who we know is lonely when we are feeling down ourselves; Going out to collect someone's urgent prescription when we've just got in out of the rain; Following the Covid guidelines when we'd really rather meet our friends and families.

Our neighbours are not just the people next door, nor just the people in our street, our village or town. They are not even just the people in our country, but the people all

across the world. Loving them means for example: Speaking out for fair vaccine distribution for everyone in all countries—rich countries paying for poor; Doing our part to combat climate catastrophe; Welcoming in refugees who have nowhere to go. That's quite hard.

 **Hymn: *When I Needed a Neighbour***

**When I needed a neighbour,
Were you there, were you there?
When I needed a neighbour, were you there?
*And the creed and the colour
and the name won't matter, were you there?***

**I was hungry and thirsty,
Were you there, were you there?
I was hungry and thirsty, were you there?
*And the creed ...***

**I was cold, and I was naked,
Were you there, were you there?
I was cold and was naked, were you there?
*And the creed ...***

**When the crosses were burning,
Were you there, were you there?
When the crosses were burning, were you there?
*And the creed ...***

**When I needed a healer,
Were you there, were you there?
When I needed a healer, were you there?
*And the creed ...***

**When they took me to prison
Were you there, were you there?**

**When they took me to prison were you there?
And the creed ...**

**Wherever you travel, I'll be there, I'll be there.
Wherever you travel, I'll be there.**

And the creed ...

Perhaps even more difficult is what we hear in Luke's Gospel:

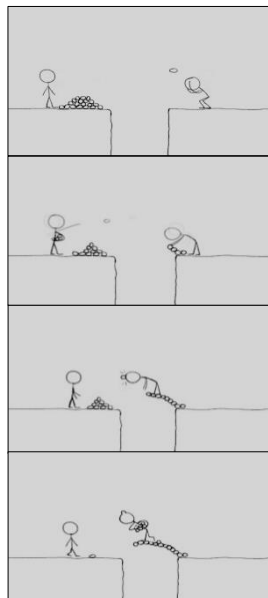
Reading Luke 6:27-32

Jesus said, *“But I say to you that listen, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you. “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.”*

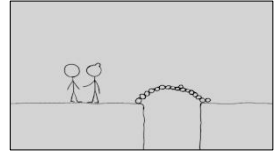
This is tougher still.

How many of us pray for the people who have upset us in some way, broken our trust and our confidence, and seek to resolve the issue rather than let it continue?

How many of us pray for the people that bully and belittle us in school, at work or in the home?



How many of us prayed for President Trump and the Proud Boys, QAnon believers and white supremacists that he exhorted to take the Capitol?



How many of us give to everyone who begs from us, whether time or money or goods?

How many of us would be pleased for someone to steal our belongings and just let them have them without any redress?

How many of us take the easy option and just love those that love us?

Toughest of all is God's love for us revealed in the suffering of Christ on the cross

Reading: John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

From the outset, before it all started, God has never ceased to love his creation nor all the people who are part of it. He has continually and lovingly called them back to hear his word, repent and follow his ways. God spoke through Old Testament prophets; through angels; through John the Baptist and then in the person of Jesus: God incarnate— God loving God's people in person. But even then people didn't believe in him, found Jesus' radical call too challenging, made up charges against him. And he gave himself up to it all, to humiliation and agonising suffering on the cross. Everything God has done he has done for each of us, even dying on the cross, so that we may be returned to his love.

🎵 **Hymn: Amazing Love**

**My Lord, what love is this that pays so dearly.
That I, the guilty one, may go free!**

Amazing love, O what sacrifice.

The Son of God given for me.

**My debt he pays, and my death he dies,
that I might live, that I might live.**

**And so they watched him die, despised, rejected.
But oh, the blood he shed, flowed for me!**

Amazing love...

**And now, this love of Christ shall flow like rivers.
Come wash your guilt away. Live again!**

Amazing love...

Amazing love indeed. Amazing and impossible to understand fully. Let's hear from St Paul again:

📖 **Reading: Ephesians 3:14-19**

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

God's love—it's unfathomable, bigger than anything of which we can conceive, never giving up, always giving freely,



endlessly forgiving. It never seeks to control. It is always there, reaching out to each of us.

I wonder how that makes you feel.

All humans need to be loved. Most can tell the difference between coercive love and love that is freely and unconditionally given. Many are fortunate enough to be loved by family and friends. And yet even then, sometimes because of circumstance, that does not always feel enough. We have a sense of something missing, a yearning for something outside of ourselves. Some call it the God-shaped hole. We are somehow incomplete if we do not know God's love for us. St Augustine wrote these words:

*You have made us for yourself, O Lord,
and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.*

Creed—We Say What We Believe

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family in heaven
and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**



♪ Hymn: *Oh, the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus*

**O the deep, deep love of Jesus!
Vast, unmeasured, boundless, free;
Rolling as a mighty ocean in its fullness over me.
Underneath me, all around me,
Is the current of his love;
Leading onward, leading homeward,
To my glorious rest above.**

**O the deep, deep love of Jesus!
Spread his praise from shore to shore,
He who loves us, ever loves us,
Changes never, nevermore;
He who died to save his loved ones,
Intercedes for them above.
He who called them his own people
Watches over them in love.**

**O the deep, deep love of Jesus!
Love of every love the best;
Vast the ocean of his blessing,
Sweet the haven of his rest.**

**O the deep, deep love of Jesus!
For my heaven of heavens is he.
This my everlasting glory: Jesus' mighty love for me.**

Prayers

Let us pray in the name of our heavenly Father, the source of all love:

We give thanks for God's precious gift of love blessing us each day; may our love reflect his love...



Loving God, **Hear our prayer.**

We give thanks for the wonders of creation; may we refrain from spoiling the beauty that is us...



Loving God, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those whose weddings have been cancelled or put on hold during the pandemic; may they grow in love and patience as they wait...



Loving God, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those whose trust and confidence in someone they love has been challenged; may the trials they face not be unsurmountable...



Loving God, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who feel unloved or unloveable; may they know your infinite love today...



Loving God, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who are mourning someone they loved; may they know your peace and comfort in their hearts...



Loving God, **Hear our prayer.**

And we pray in the words that Jesus taught us:

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

**Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil,
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and forever, Amen.**

♪ Hymn: *Such Love*

Such love, pure as the whitest snow;

Such love, weeps for the shame I know;

Such love, paying the debt I owe;

O Jesus, such love.

Such love, stilling my restlessness;

Such love, filling my emptiness;

Such love, showing me holiness;

O Jesus, such love.

Such love, springs from eternity;

Such love, streaming through history;

Such love, fountain of life to me;

O Jesus, such love.

Blessing

May the peace of God which passes all understanding fill your hearts and minds with the knowledge and love of God and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and those whom you love, and those whom you find hard to love.

Amen.

Reading: *1 John 4:7-8*

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Go in the peace and love of God. **In the name of Christ, Amen.**

Love Changes Everything

Love, love changes everything,
hands and faces, earth and sky.
Love, love changes everything,
how you live and how you die.

Love, can make the summer fly,
or a night seem like a lifetime.
Yes love, love changes everything;
now I tremble at your name.
Nothing in the world will ever be the same.

Love, love changes everything,
days are longer, words mean more.

Love, love changes everything,
pain is deeper than before.

Love, will turn your world around
and that world will last forever.

Yes, love, love changes everything,
brings you glory, brings you shame,
Nothing in the world will ever be the same.

Off into the world we go
planning futures, shaping years.
Love bursts in and suddenly
all our wisdom disappears.

Love, makes fools of everyone;
all the rules we make are broken.
Yes, love, love changes everyone,
live or perish, in its flame.

Love will never, never let you be the same;
Love will never, never let you be the same.

