

“Let the peace of Christ rule. . .(ii) ”

We are offering a series of reflections for individuals and churches who may be finding it difficult to provide midweek prayer and shared learning from Scripture. You can use these by watching the YouTube video, reading the relevant Bible passage and then reflecting on the questions below. To help make this a shared activity, you are encouraged to reflect on this together with friends using an online conference package, or simply arrange with a friend for them to watch it too. Then ring each other up, share your thoughts and responses and then pray for one another, and pray together for our world.

Read Colossians 3:15-17

If you can, watch the YouTube video: https://youtu.be/zpx0Gz5BU_E

This is our second reflection that is centred on the invitation contained in Colossians 3 v15 to let the peace of Christ rule our hearts. The last one explored the sentences that precede this invitation – this time you are invited to reflect on the words that follow. This is a time when many are looking forward to the opportunity to physically gather again. As well as helping us prepare for that opportunity (see previous reflection) we can also be invited to reflect on the nature and purpose of our gatherings, through the words that follow after it.

Let the word of God dwell in you: Paul speaks of a community interacting through teaching, challenge and through spiritual songs and statements. But this springs from dwelling in God's Word; God's Word provides the narrative for our conversations. Words can be powerful, and we live in a world that can very easily generate and reproduce them. We are surrounded by more words that we can possibly read or take in. When words can be so easily taken for granted, exchanged, or ignored, we are invited to take a different attitude to God's Word. Let this become an invitation for you to take your time, let God's Word dwell in your mind, let God speak and don't be rushed on. Our minds can so easily become consumed by the next task or the next deadline – as you reflect on these Scriptures or perhaps others, set a pace that allows God to speak. We are called to interact with one another as those who have allowed God's word to infuse our conversation.

Be a people of gratitude: As we offer the narrative of God's Word through hymns and psalms we do so with gratitude. Recent events have been a struggle - they have been painful and costly – we have lost much, and our most natural instinct may not be one of gratitude. But this is what is commended as setting the tone of our conversations. As we do, the direction of our conversation also changes. We shift from engaging with each other to engaging with God together. It may feel a bold claim, but God becomes the audience. Often our behaviour is influenced by who is watching – it may do us no harm to remember that our conversations and interactions take place in God's presence. We want them to be worthy of that reality.

Be worthy of the name of Jesus: Paul concludes by inviting us to do everything “in the name of the Lord Jesus”. This is more than simply a label or a brand, it speaks to us of acting in ways that are worthy of the name of Jesus. This reminds us that, as a people of God, there is another “audience” – the world is watching us. We often speak of someone's name in relation to their reputation – if they have been smeared, a person may speak of intending to clear their name. As those who embrace the rule of Christ's peace, we are invited to interact in a way that enhances the reputation of Jesus, in whose name we live and act as a community of his people. Spend some time reflecting on how these realities might impact your conversations and interactions.

PRAYER

Loving God, though isolation has become such a defining part of our lives, we give thanks that you are always with us and we remain part of your community. As we interact and look forward to being able to meet and gather again, may our conversations be rooted in your word, our words be expressions of gratitude and our every deed be worthy of your name. AMEN