

Dorset South & West Circuit Written service for 29/8/21, prepared by Revd Brenda Stephenson

Call to worship The Lord's compassions never fail.
They are new every morning.

Hymn Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;
as thou hast been thou for ever wilt be:
Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided.
Great is thy faithfulness Lord, unto me.

Summer and winter. And springtime and harvest,
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Thomas Chisholm 1866-1960i

Prayer Lord of all time and space,
We thank you that we can know your presence in every place
and at every moment.
Wherever we are at this time your love surrounds us.
We praise you for being a God who cares so much for your creation
that you reach out towards it in love.
We know this because you entered it in Jesus in a special way.
And he has made this clear to us.
Through him you kept the promises you had made to your people down the
centuries.
In him you offer us new hopes and a source of power for good.
May our worship today renew our hope
and open up our lives to what you are able to do for us and through us.
We ask this through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord.
And in his name we pray the words he has taught us to pray:

Lord's Prayer (in whichever version you wish to pray.)

Introduction

Forgive me, if this seems a rather personal question.

Do you have any implants?

I think the first time I came across the term was to do with a man whose hearing was failing who was given a cochlear implant. The way it works is quite complicated but what is implanted in a person's inner ear makes it possible for him to hear. Amazing! The receiver and the electrodes are implanted inside the head of the person, which with technology enables him to hear in a way which no hearing aid could match.

Perhaps more common is a dental implant. It acts as a replacement for the root of a missing tooth. It is placed into the jawbone and allowed to fuse with the bone over the span of a few months. It can then hold a replacement tooth. Having a dental implant fused to the jawbone is the closest thing we know to mimicking a natural tooth. Here a surgical fixture becomes part of the person's skeleton so that a new tooth can be inserted.

Why am I asking you to think about implants? Because one verse in our reading says: Welcome humbly the implanted word that has the power to save your souls. So we shall go on to think about God's implanted word.

Now we'll share the whole reading:

James 1:19-25 Hearing and Doing the Word

You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome humbly the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

"God's implanted word" – some thoughts.

Our physical implants, in ear or jaw, are placed within our skeleton and over time become part of us. So will God's word when we allow it to make its home deep within. (The word translated implanted can also mean rooted.) God's word will become part of us. It will inform our thinking, inspire our actions. Just like the fruit of the Spirit this will be a natural outworking of our closeness of relationship with God. It shouldn't take effort or even thought. Just happen naturally.

That's the theory. We all know in practice how easily we can continue to block this natural flow. We have been brought up to be independent, thinking, planning creatures. We have to shift our centre of gravity to allow God to have his way with us. For he never forces himself upon us. This is always done with our consent. Yet day to day that consent is often undermined by our habit of living our own lives.

Would you say that God's word is implanted in you, in your life? At least to some extent?

Do you sometimes find yourself acting naturally out of love and goodness without having to think about it or weigh pros and cons?

Do you not only hear what you are being inwardly urged to do, but also do it?

I'm sure we can all think of people and organisations who say the right things but don't follow up with actions. Or applaud those things and then forget about them in daily life. Climate change immediately comes to mind. We cannot ignore it. But will any government do what it says it will? And have *you* thought of ways to encourage the Government to follow through Cop 26 this autumn in their actions? And there will be things you can do yourself which, though small, will show your commitment to acting for the future of the earth. I take it you think that action needs to be taken. It will take a change of lifestyle for most of us to follow through this word about caring for the earth

On the other hand I hope you can think of words heard, that did lead to action. The example that comes to my mind is Beth Shriever who won a gold medal at Tokyo racing on her BMX. Funding was cut so she had to try and crowdfund her way to the Olympics. People not only heard of her need for about £50,000 but also found all that money so that she was able to prepare with other races around the world and go on to win all her races at Tokyo.

How shall we hear God's messages deeply enough for them to be examples of his word being implanted in us?

We listen for God when we read or hear Scripture. How can we better hear him? It is for each of us to discover our own answer to this question. What works for me is to read a passage slowly and see which sentence, phrase or word sticks in my mind. Then to repeat it to help it sink down and take root. It can also be helpful to ask myself Why this word? How does it link with what is happening in my life right now?

However God speaks through many different routes. We sometimes hear him in the words of others, in news bulletins, through our everyday experiences. We have learnt, some of us over

many years, the ways in which God relates to us. So we have some idea what to be listening for. Though God is always a God of surprises. What will speak to us most convincingly is truth. And it is a truth we shall recognise as coming from God because it is spoken with understanding and love.

Then it's a case of living with the words from God you receive and asking for guidance as to how you can put them into action.

Sharing these thoughts has led me to another bible verse from John's gospel: Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." John 8:31-32. Surely this is also about those words rooted in our hearts and minds. It will lead to us acting rightly out of trust in God. It will be doing the truth to use a favourite term of John's gospel, and doing so without conscious thinking, without effort. In my experience that doesn't happen very often. Maybe because I think too much. Or because I fear the unplanned, the unknown. However, those times I'm aware of when, for example, I stopped without thinking to give someone I knew a lift, or offered to do something without counting the cost, remind me that from time to time I can hear God's word and do it. I hope you can think of examples too.

So, welcome humbly the implanted word that has the power to save your souls – and the power to inspire a great deal of loving good as well. Amen – so be it!

Hymn Jesus, be the centre,
 be my source, be my light,
 Jesus.

 Jesus, be the centre,
 be my hope, be my song,
 Jesus.

*Be the fire in my heart,
be the wind in these sails;
be the reason that I live,
Jesus, Jesus.*

 Jesus, be my vision,
 be my path, be my guide,
 Jesus.

Be the fire in my heart.....

Repeat first verse.
(Michael Frye)

Prayers *I suggest you leave some times of silence in between the requests so that God may bring particular people or situations into your mind.*
Loving God we bring to you now people, places, circumstances for which you are calling us to pray.
First we pray for our world and for countries and peoples in particular need at this time.

Give them courage, wisdom and hope we pray.
We pray for our own country with its different levels of government and all who give leadership.

Give them wisdom and concern for the wellbeing of all.
We pray for individuals and organisations locally, including our churches.

Give them healing, vision and unity we pray.

Finally we pray for ourselves, offering God our needs, as far as we know them.

Speak to us deep within your word of reassurance, possibility and challenge. Above all teach us to know your loving presence with us at all times and in all places and situations.

We offer our prayers in the spirit of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hymn

My God! I know, I feel thee mine
and will not quit my claim,
till all I have is lost in thine
and all renewed I am.

I hold thee with a trembling hand,
but will not let thee go,
till steadfastly by faith I stand
and all thy goodness know.

When shall I see the welcome hour
that plants my God in me –
spirit of health, and life, and power,
and perfect liberty?

Jesus, thine all-victorious love
shed in my heart abroad;
then shall my feet no longer rove,
rooted and fixed in God.

Refining fire, go through my heart,
illuminate my soul;
scatter thy life through every part,
and sanctify the whole.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Benediction

God's richest blessing be with us, go with us, and stay with us, always.
Amen.