

The Challenge of the Cross

It is strange at the moment to look in our diaries and find nothing but blank pages. Those who are still working need to keep track of when the shifts are, and so it was that I realised that this coming weekend the band was due to be visiting Braintree Corps. In addition to enhancing the worship at Hadleigh, part of our mission is to support other small corps. Following a very worthwhile trip to Woking last year, we were going to present a Saturday open air concert in Braintree, given by the full band, with a small group returning to lead worship on the Sunday.

Having made contact this week with Lt. Richard Wearmouth, who is in charge of the corps at Braintree, he explained the corps is busy supplementing the efforts of the town's food bank, as well as organising a home-based version of messy Church. We asked Richard whether he would like to suggest a favourite piece for our band devotions. He has chosen Dean Goffin's selection 'The Challenge of the Cross', and sent us a link to a version he finds particularly moving. Please spend a few moments to view this video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwNy6TQm5M4>

At this time when we are all facing all sort of challenges to our regular routines, sacrificing our usual opportunities for sharing fellowship and companionship with one another for the sake of the common good, it is good to remind ourselves of the supreme sacrifice made by Christ for our sakes. We read this in Romans 12:

A Living Sacrifice:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Humble Service in the Body of Christ:

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Love in Action:

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

One of the most telling references in the band piece is the inclusion of the line 'How can I make a lesser sacrifice when Jesus gave his all'. Anything we have to sacrifice, be it on a short term basis or in the longer term, pales into insignificance when set alongside what Christ has done for us. Paul calls on us to make our lives into a living sacrifice, and there are ways in which we can do that even in these times of isolation. Verse 7 calls upon us to encourage one another and I would exhort you to do just this, through whatever contact we can have, via letter, telephone or social media.

Richard also informed us that his favourite march is 'The Red Shield' and we close this week's thought on an upbeat note with that march, recorded in isolation by the New York Staff Band:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhCM8qSIZHM>