

SUNDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2020

## SATURDAY MORNING PRAYER

We invite you to join with us this Saturday morning at 09h30, from the comfort of your own home, for a time of praise and prayer.

It is folly to focus our energies and minds on worldly possessions. The wonderful commitment of God is that He will provide all that we need if we put Him first in our lives. **Luke 12:22-31** will prompt our confession and praise before we address the **prayer points** given on the last page.

## SUNDAY SERVICES

Little Hill Church, Wigston	10h30	<a href="http://littlehill.org.uk">littlehill.org.uk</a>
Knighton Evangelical Church	10h30	<a href="http://knighton.org.uk">knighton.org.uk</a>
All Souls, Langham Place	09h30 / 11h30	<a href="http://allsouls.org">allsouls.org</a>
Christ Church, Fulwood	10h30	<a href="http://fulwoodchurch.co.uk">fulwoodchurch.co.uk</a>
<b>Oadby Evangelical Free Church</b>	16h00	see e-mail invitation

## MIDWEEK MINISTRY

In our 'Midweek Ministry' video last week, we looked at *the crowded door of blessing* and *the secret door of prayer*. But these are not the only doors worth opening in Scripture, as we shall find out next Wednesday evening.

All of our previous talks, and transcripts for many of them, can be found at [www.oefc.org.uk](http://www.oefc.org.uk) by clicking on 'Resources' and then 'Midweek Ministry'.

## SHOEBOX APPEAL and LIFE MAGAZINE

Please remember that we must collect all the filled boxes for this year's *Shoe Box Appeal*, organised by Blythswood Care, within the next fortnight. See <https://jennyfwhalley.wixsite.com/oefcblythswoodboxes> for more details, or contact the Whalleys otherwise, if you need an empty gift-wrapped box to fill or have any queries about the project.

The magazine *LIFE*, professionally produced by the Christian publishers *10ofThose*, contains a mixture of evangelistic content and other articles. Included are testimonies from well-known people, recipes, gift ideas, money saving advice, activity pages for adults and children as well as other evangelistic articles. Other churches in our area use this magazine as an evangelistic tool, and we have decided to follow suit. Copies should be delivered across Oadby, by the Royal Mail, in the working week commencing Monday, 9 November. Please do *pray* for this initiative.

## your good health

Some events are so significant in our lives that we remember them always, even if we forget the exact dates on which they occurred. They may be events of personal significance: the day on which we were married, our first child was born or a loved one died; the day on which we passed our driving test or final examinations; the day on which we started work or, at last, on which we retired! But they may also be events of national or international significance: the day on which war was declared or victory was announced; the day on which an important attack or invasion took place; the day on which man first set foot on the moon; the day on which JFK was assassinated, the Berlin Wall fell, the Princess of Wales died.

So children ask their parents, and we ask one another, “Where were you on the day that...” Following in that pattern, *can you remember where you were on the evening of 27 July 2012? Do you remember what happened then?*

On the evening of that day, in London, there was staged an amazing performance. It cost more than £25 million to produce, lasted for almost four hours and was watched by a worldwide television audience estimated at 900 million people.

It was, of course, the opening ceremony of the *XXX Olympiad*, the summer Olympic Games. It provided a platform for our nation to reflect on and portray proudly our varied landscape and many peoples, our rich history, and the many cultural, industrial, scientific and other contributions that we have made to the world.

One of the great achievements celebrated in that remarkable ceremony was the NHS, the National Health Service, which was founded in 1948 and remains close to the heart of our national life. It aims to provide “comprehensive health and rehabilitation services for [the] prevention and cure of disease”. And, because they are paid for by public taxation, the vast majority of NHS services are free of charge for people legally resident in the UK.

All of us have cause to be thankful for the NHS, and not only because of what it can do for us in a time of pandemic. It is wonderful to know that we have expert medical care available to us, day and night, wherever we are and whatever our need.

There is always argument about statistics, but it is probably the case that the NHS is the fifth largest employer in the world – it has more than 1.5 million employees – and it is certainly true that its annual budget at present, excluding any extra funds that may be awarded to it because of the pandemic, is a staggering £140 billion.

The NHS may be unique, but in developing and developed countries across the world, huge sums of private and public money are being spent on health insurance and on the prevention and cure of disease. One historian has even suggested that the twentieth century “will be remembered chiefly, not as an age of political conflicts and technical inventions, but as an age in which human society dared to think of the health of the whole human race as a practical objective.”

[attributed to Arnold Toynbee, 1889–1975]

This does not mean that concerns over health are purely modern a phenomenon. The poet Virgil (70–19 BC) opined that “the greatest wealth is health”; Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), or an Arabic proverb, argued that “he who has health has hope, and he who has hope has everything”; Gandhi (1869–1948) once said that “it is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver”.

It may be true, though, that never before has there been such a time as this, when people are so very interested in diet and exercise, in health and safety, in looking better and living longer. The benefits of good health are undeniable, and it is right that we should take care of our bodies: we need to eat the right foods, to take the right exercise, to get enough sleep, to avoid infection and injury. We should also take care of our mental health and take care over what we read, listen to and watch.

Though said partly in jest, there is more than a grain of truth in the comment made by a Canadian cleric: “many people spend their health gaining wealth, and then have to spend their wealth to regain their health.” And what an indictment this is on the mores of our modern Western culture!

Behind all of the concerns for our health lie a simple and, for very many people, an uncomfortable and unstated fact. However healthy we may be, however careful we are with our health, however much money we spend on our health, there will come a time when our health fails irretrievably and, for that or some other reason, we die. And the truth is that we do not know when that time will come.

In the autumn of the year AD 29, a man in the crowd asked Jesus for help: “Teacher”, he said, “tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” Jesus replied by telling a parable – a short and memorable story designed to teach a simple lesson. This is what He said:

The land of a rich man produced plentifully, <sup>17</sup> and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ <sup>18</sup> And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. <sup>19</sup> And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’

<sup>20</sup> But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ <sup>21</sup> So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God.

Luke 12:13–21

The word translated ‘Fool!’ means to be without reason, to be careless and reckless in our thinking and act without proper reflection or understanding. Such was the rich man in the story; such were the Pharisees, whose focus was ever on external rites rather than internal righteousness (Luke 11:40); such are all who raise senseless objections to Christian teaching (1 Corinthians 15:36; 1 Peter 2:15).

But why was the rich man a fool? Wherein lay his folly? Notice that he is not condemned for working hard, for being rich, for ensuring that his bumper crop was stored in barns fit for purpose. He was foolish because his covetous focus on material possessions, which are only temporary, blinded him to the need to make spiritual provision for eternity. He concentrated so much on himself and on his material wealth that he lost sight of his God and his desperate spiritual poverty.

What a fool he was to presume that his many possessions would satisfy him for ever, that he would have years of life ahead of him, that he had need only to concern himself with his own comforts and pleasures! In truth, he had no control over his future – that was in the hands of God – and within hours he would be swept from time to eternity. And there, at the judgement seat of Christ before which “we must all appear” (2 Corinthians 5:10), the rich man’s material possessions, every one of them left behind, would count for nothing.

All of us, surely, want to be healthy and, if not wealthy, at least ‘comfortable’ in relation to our monies. But there is no guarantee of this and no certainty, however hard we work, that we shall be as rich as the man in Jesus’s story and reach a position where we think that we may have “many years” ahead of us in which to “relax, eat, drink [and] be merry.”

Whatever the state of your health or size of your bank balance, you can be sure of this:

- that “there is no health in my bones because of my sin” (Psalm 38:3);
- that God can bring us “health and healing” (Jeremiah 33:6), as Jesus proved in His ministry (Matthew 8:14–17, 15:29–31);
- that Jesus came for “those who are sick” and need that remedy for sin which He alone can provide (Matthew 9:10–13; Acts 4:12).

Jesus is the “sun of righteousness ... with healing in its wings” (Malachi 4:2), and it is “with his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:4–6). For your good health, for all eternity, you need Jesus! Are you in His hands and under His care?

## prayer points

- Praise God that He is faithful to His promises and both can and will meet our needs. Praise God that He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7), so we need not “be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving” can make our requests known to Him (Philippians 4:4–7). Praise God for all the material and spiritual riches that He gives us so generously, not least the gift of the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13).
- Pray for all aspects of the continuing battle against Covid-19.  
Pray for the mercy of God upon us, locally and nationally, and that we all may be wise in how we act and react to the new restrictions. Pray for the Good News Hospital in Mandritsara and the work of VOCM in Tamil Nadu.
- Praise God for the evangelical churches in the Lebanon and their current work in providing practical help and taking the gospel to Beirut. Pray that Blythswood Care may secure all the funds and permissions they need in relation to this year’s Shoebox Appeal.
- Pray for revival in our days and in our land. Pray for Laburnum Road Community Church with pastor Paul Mason and his wife Bernie. Pray for open minds and receptive hearts to the *Life* magazine being distributed in Oadby.
- Pray for OEFEC, in particular:  
that we shall know God’s will as we try further to develop our ‘remote’ midweek Bible Studies, other meetings and Sunday services, and as we contemplate resuming some face-to-face sessions of worship and ministry;  
that we shall be directed clearly to the man of God’s choice for the pastorate here;  
for wisdom as we consider whatever decision has been taken by the North Memorial Homes Trustees regarding our lease on the Hall;  
for all members of our church and congregation, not least those undergoing or anticipating treatment for various medical needs.

## the antidote to folly

My gracious Lord, I own your right  
To every service I can pay;  
And call it my supreme delight  
To hear your dictates and obey.  
  
What is my being but for Thee,  
Its sure support, its noblest end;  
Your ever-smiling face to see  
And serve the cause of such a friend?  
  
I would not breathe for worldly joy,  
Or to increase my worldly good,  
Nor future days or powers employ  
To spread a sounding name abroad.  
  
But to my Saviour I would live,  
To Him who for my ransom died;  
Nor could untainted Eden give  
Such bliss as blossoms at His side.  
  
His work my hoary age shall bless,  
When youthful vigour is no more;  
And my last hour of life confess  
His love has animating power.

Philip Doddridge (1702–51) was the youngest of twenty children, all but two of whom died in infancy. His parents were keen Christians, but he was orphaned at the age of 13. He showed great promise, so the Duchess of Bedford offered to support him at Oxford or Cambridge. Declining to adopt the Anglicanism those universities required, he studied at a Dissenting Academy in Kibworth from 1719 and qualified for the ministry in 1723. He served as a minister at Kibworth, Market Harborough and then – from 1729 until his death – Northampton. The Academy he led in Northampton was so good that it rivalled or even outshone Oxbridge in his day.

Doddridge wrote about 400 hymns, often to sum up the message of his sermons; published posthumously, many are very fine and soon appeared in various hymn books. *My gracious Lord*, entitled “Christ’s Service, the Fruit of our Labours on Earth. Philippians 1:22”, sets very high aspirations, but entirely consistent with the godly life of Doddridge.