



### Looking Inwards (15 mins) *Caring For Each Other*

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



### Looking Outwards (15 mins) *Concern For Others*

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?

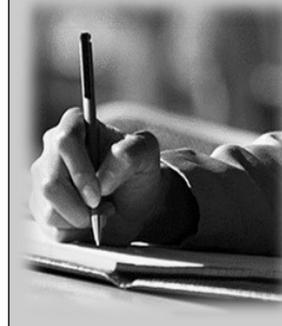


### HG163 Annual District Church Meeting 2018 **Bearing The Disgrace Of Jesus**

Hebrews 13:1-16

Home Group Study Notes

22 April 2018 - Revd Paul A. Carr



**PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION BEFORE THE MEETING!**

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful for your discussions.*



### Welcome (10 mins) *Ice Breaker*

In this Easter season, what really came home to you 'new and afresh' during Holy Week?



### Looking Upwards (10 mins) *Worship*

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...

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*Part of The Billericay & Little Burstead Team Ministry*



## HG163 Annual District Church Meeting 2018 Bearing The Disgrace Of Jesus

Hebrews 13:1-16

Home Group Sermon

22 April 2018 - Revd Paul A. Carr

### Introduction

I'm in my tenth year as Team Rector here in Billericay and I love being part of the Emmanuel church family. I love your friendship, support, generosity of spirit, your prayers, willingness to take risks and for putting up with me! What's not to like? But I can't help but wonder if feeling like this can border on complacency or self-satisfaction, both of which are dangerous places to be in - especially in our Christian lives. I was talking about this with someone the other day and asking the question whether we lose our vision/passion when we are in a comfortable place? With that thought in mind, I want us to think about what it might mean for us to go outside of our comfort zone for Jesus. I want to focus on Hebrews 13:13: *Let us go to Jesus outside the camp, bearing the disgrace He bore.* Please bear with me on this, it's been a busy week.

### 1. Jesus is our example of 'Bearing Disgrace'

Have you ever wondered why Jesus had to go outside the gate to be crucified? In ancient times, you would never bury someone inside a Jewish city nor carry out an execution inside its walls. Criminals had to be executed outside the city gates. But there's another reason. God purposefully decided that the most important event in the history of the world would not take place in heaven, on a throne or in a temple but on a rubbish dump 'outside the gate.' Why? Because Jesus came to earth to save those who are 'outside the gates.' Throughout the Gospels we see Jesus spending time with those who were 'outside the gate.' He could be found amongst the Lepers or daring to drink wine with Tax collectors and talking with Prostitutes. I believe being comfortable is a dangerous place for Christians to be. Because, it seems to me, that's completely the opposite to Jesus' ministry. He never took the easy option. He was hugely unpopular to those who opposed his message, but he gave life to those who listened and believed. Few of us, if we are honest, can bear the thought of not being respected and liked. We all want to fit in, don't we? We want to blend in with those around us rather than stand out from the crowd.

### 2. We bear the disgrace of Jesus when we have a passion to reach the Lost

These words, spoken by Pope Benedict XVI a few years ago, are as inspiring as they are radical. *The Christian must be inspired by Christ's holy zeal. For him it is not a matter of indifference that so many people are living in the desert. There are so many kinds of desert, there is the desert of poverty; there is the desert of hunger and thirst; there is the desert of abandonment and loneliness of depression and destroyed love. There is the desert of God's darkness, the emptiness of souls who are no longer aware of their dignity or the goal of human life ...The church, as a whole, and all her members, like Christ, must set out to lead people out of the desert towards the place of life. Towards friendship with the Son of God. Towards the one who gives life, and life in abundance.*

I'm not sure I've heard many, if any, Anglican Bishops saying it quite like that. Most of them seem to talk about battering down the hatches, maintaining the flock we have and hoping for the best.

4. In what ways might you bear the disgrace Jesus bore in your daily lives?

5. Are you part of a community/hobby group? If not, why not consider attending the Billericay Volunteer Network forum on Saturday 16 June at the Library. What would be the benefits of joining a volunteer group?

6. Do you have a vision/passion to meet a need that isn't being met in our community? Might your home group take ownership of this? Could you write a proposal to the DCC for them to consider?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



## Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1. Looking back over the past year, what are you most thankful about in the life of Emmanuel?

2. Do you agree with Paul when he says that being comfortable can be a dangerous place for the Christian to be? Why? Why Not?

3. Are you prepared to bear the disgrace that Jesus bore? How might not doing so be a hindrance to the spreading of the good news of Jesus?

Pope Benedict described many kinds of desert that exist in our world. What could we be doing to help those who are in the desert of: Poverty; those who are in prison or homeless; those struggling drug/alcohol addiction and those struggling to hold their families together; Refugees; those in the desert of Bereavement. What are the areas of our church life, and our personal lives, where we might need to 'bear the disgrace' in order to live out the Gospel in the way God is calling us to?

Jesus went outside the gates and so must we. We must go to those who are hurting and struggling with life. We must move out of the place that is comfortable and convenient and secure and familiar and that which is traditional and safe and cosy, outside of the comfort zone, and be willing to bear His disgrace on the Calvary Road.

### 3. We bear the disgrace of Jesus through a belief in the orthodoxy and inerrancy of scripture, the Apostolic creeds and traditions of the Christian faith.

The Church is guilty of accommodating itself to the toxic liberalism that accedes to the relativism of this age on issues such as marriage and human sexuality rather than being the salt and light we are called to be. In a recent article in *The Spectator*, self-professed atheist Matthew Parris criticised the Church for being unfaithful to her theology and 'bending to a prevailing mood'. What an insight – and what a rebuke! The morals, values and ethics of the church are becoming increasingly indistinct from those of the world.

J.B. Phillips writes: *The great difference between present-day Christianity and that of which we read in the New Testament Epistles is that to us, it is primarily a performance; to them it was a real experience. We are apt to reduce Christian religion to a code or, at best, a rule of heart and life. To these men it is quite plainly the invasion of their lives by a new quality of life altogether. They do not hesitate to describe this as Christ living in them. Perhaps if we believed what they believed we could achieve what they achieved.*

In a fallen world, we have always, and will always, be compelled to buck the trend and stand against the tide of the prevailing culture. I believe we have to be prepared to bear the disgrace of Jesus by standing up for the fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith in the Orthodoxy and Inerrancy of Scripture, the Apostolic Creeds and Traditions of the Christian faith. That's one of the reasons why our next Home Group study series is based on the Apostles Creed.

And that's why the theme of Spring Harvest this year, 'Only The Brave' based on the book of James, was, in my view, a timely wake-up call to the church to take discipleship and holiness seriously as part of our service to the world for which Jesus died. The morning Bible teaching by Simon Ponsonby on living separated lives for Jesus was excellent, prophetic, challenging, encouraging and uncomfortable but, sometimes, exactly what we need to hear. But we know that the idea of committing our lives to Jesus and of allowing his Holy Spirit to change and transform us, to enable us to grow in our faith to become active disciples flies in the face of much of what the Church in this country stands for today.

Steve Chalke, founder of Oasis Trust, was excommunicated by the Evangelical Alliance a few years ago because of his heretical beliefs. He said the crucifixion was a mistake and likened God to a cosmic child abuser!! Whilst we might not give much, if any, credibility to his words, the danger is that many people do.

Have you ever wondered why it is that the cross is a symbol of the Christian faith, and not a cradle to remind us about the much-loved Christmas story, or a scroll to remind us of Jesus' amazing teaching, or a crown, because Jesus is king? No - it's a cross, to remind us of Jesus' death. The cross is central to the Christian faith.

We believe that Jesus, the unique Son of God, died on the cross for our sins. Without the cross the Christian faith has lost its meaning and purpose. Without the cross there is no forgiveness of sins; no salvation and no bridging of the gap between a sinful world and a holy God.

**A 10<sup>th</sup> Century African Hymn:** *The cross is the hope of Christians; The cross is the resurrection of the dead; The cross is the way of the lost; The cross is the Saviour of the lost; The cross is the staff of the lame; The cross is the guide of the blind; The cross is the strength of the weak; The cross is the doctor of the sick; The cross is the aim of the priests; The cross is the hope of the hopeless; The cross is the freedom of the slaves; The cross is the power of the kings; The cross is the water of the seeds; The cross is the consolation of the bondmen; The cross is the source of those who seek water; The cross is the cloth of the naked. Thank you Father for the cross.*

If we want to see spiritual renewal, if we want the Church to break out, we need to put back the cross. No one is saved outside of the gospel, but no one is outside the gospel's power to save.

To believe that people must have 'conversion' experience is an unusual thing nowadays, and RT Kendall made this point when he gave his 'Heart Cry' at Spring Harvest - speaking as if it was the last talk he would ever give. You're more likely to hear the phrase 'born again' used to advertise cars or to describe the resurgent form of sportsmen/women than hearing it used to describe Christian conversion. The language of being 'born again' has been dropped from the church vocabulary and that's partly because of the bad press that phrase has received from American Televangelists on the one hand, and the ridicule that unbelievers throw at believers on the other.

There's a story told of a preacher who was invited to preach at Saint Paul's Cathedral and who used John 3:3 as his text at the morning service: *'I tell you the truth, no-one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.'* The Dean of the Cathedral took the speaker home for lunch and, when reflecting on his sermon said, don't forget this is the CofE, we don't use language like that. The preacher was scheduled to speak at Evensong and introduced his text as John 3:7: *'You should not be surprised at my saying you must be born again.'*

Let us return to the gospel of Jesus: crucified and resurrected. Let us hold firmly to it and hold it out to the world and bear the disgrace that comes our way.

#### **4. Let us 'bear disgrace' with Grace**

There is inevitability in suffering for Jesus as we bear his disgrace. The Apostles left the Sanhedrin rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for His name. Paul wrote to Timothy, don't be ashamed of Jesus Christ our Lord or of me his prisoner etc. There's no doubt that we will, as individuals and as a church, have to be willing to 'bear disgrace' on the decisions we make and things we do.

How should we respond? The answer can be found in Hebrews 13:15-16: Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name. Vs16: And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

We do what we do because we are followers of Jesus. It's easier said than done, I know, but this is when Christian integrity becomes more important than popularity. We must be prepared to bear the disgrace of Jesus with grace. Bearing the disgrace of Jesus is something that Christians of every generation have had to endure. For some people it meant losing their lives and, for some of us, it might mean just that in the eyes of our culture, both secular and religious. It may mean losing our lives before our family and friends and work colleagues. But as we do that, let us do it with grace. You see, when you bear disgrace it's easy to want to fight back.

It's easy to start abusing those who are abusing you. Let us bear the disgrace so that whatever fiery darts are fired us, it will be only grace that seeps from our wounds. And that applies to me, the leadership team, members of DCC and those involved in any, and every, area of ministry and everyone who considers Emmanuel to be their spiritual home. It has to be this way if we want to be able to stand together, and work together, for the exciting and challenging future that lies ahead for us as a worshipping community.

#### **Conclusion**

We have some great things taking place here at Emmanuel with many people doing some great work. We are not a perfect church because we are all imperfect people. There are some areas of church life that we don't do well at all, especially when it comes to young people. And that is something we need to address sooner rather than later. And if we don't have people here able/willing to volunteer, might we need to put our hands in our pockets and employ someone who will? The experiment of Messy Church has been a great success, it's breathed new life into our young families and given many of us a great event to invite people along too.

There is a sense in that when we come to Jesus we need to be thinking, not just outside the camp, but outside the box. How many times have I said that we are only limited by our imagination when it comes to being church? And outside the box is not conforming to Christianity that our culture expects it to be and, even at times, as the church has practised it.

***When the church is at its worst it wants to tell the world what its problem is; when the church is at its best it does something to respond to the world's need.***

As Christians we should offer something that is distinctly different because Jesus is at the centre of what we do - the world wants an authentic alternative. Let us be willing to say Jesus is the answer and let us be willing to use whatever means possible, to bring people to Jesus. Isn't that the mission of the church? Of course it is. Let us be willing to bear the shame of disgrace in the community through a ministry that reaches out.

If we, as followers of Jesus, are taking up the cross he has asked us to bear, there is an inevitable clash. There is an inevitable clash between Biblical Christianity and church tradition. There is an inevitable clash between church and culture. There is an inevitable clash between old and new. There is an inevitable clash between what we think right for others and what they really need. There is an inevitable clash between preferring the needs of others and our own wellbeing. But if we want to be a church that thinks outside the box, and goes outside the camp, touching the community for Jesus in which we live, then we need be prepared to bear the disgrace he bore.

My challenge/question to each of you this morning is simply this: ***Will you be willing to go outside the camp and bear the disgrace of Jesus for the Gospel's sake?***

## **Emmanuel Church Text for 2018**

*For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the spirit of sonship. And by him we cry 'Abba Father.'*

**Romans 8:15**