



# THE PURSUIT OF GODLINESS

*1 Made in the Image of God*



14 JUNE, 2020

*Please click on text in **RED** to listen to music or join in singing on YouTube. When finished, please shut down YouTube and you will be returned to this page. Thank you*

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*Welcome Church and Welcome to Worship!*

Last Sunday we completed a 7-part series on “Being Church” and this Sunday we begin a 4-part series on, **The Pursuit of Godliness**. Fathers’ Day falls in the middle of this series.

The best human brains are not able to get their heads around the virus that has gripped the world. There are 21 viral types that wreak havoc with the human body which represent an insignificant fraction of the 100 million viral types on earth. Most viral types are actually vital to our very existence (John Lennox in, ‘Where is God in a Coronavirus world?’)

Let’s gather in a spirit of humility before Almighty and Eternal God in whose image we are made, to admit our inability to cure the world of all its ills, and acknowledge the fact, we cannot match God’s wisdom.

**LISTEN** **Holy Spirit! Come and Fill this Place**

## PRAYER

Eternal God! Creator of air, land and water; life giver of all that lives in the sky, on land, in the water, and our life sustainer. We gather with joy because You are God, and you have created us in your image. We belong to you; Your imprimatur is all over us.

Define our worship this morning Loving Father, and focus our hearts and minds on You. Let the Holy Spirit land on us as a drop of water, causing ripples that reach deep into the hidden recesses of our lives, helping us surrender all we have held back.

When we return to our lives, use us as a drop of water, which when it lands on the pool of our families, friends and neighbours, ripples out into infinity, changing us all into Your image. This we pray, in the Name of Jesus, who is seated at your right hand, praying for us. **AMEN**

**HYMN**      **We bring sacrifice of love/praise**

**READING 1**                      **Genesis 1:26-27**

God said, *Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness [spiritual personality and moral character]; let them have complete authority over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, over the entire earth, and over everything that creeps and crawls on the earth.* So God created man in His own image, in the image and likeness of God He created him; male and female He created them. **AMEN.**

## **Repenting and Lamenting in times like these**

O God, hear our prayer, for all among us, who lament and repent, and for those who face discrimination every day because of air skin colour, ***We lament.***

For those among us with white skin who benefit from racist systems without realising it. ***We repent***

For those among us who struggle and waited long for the Promised Land of freedom and equality. ***We lament.***

For those among us who have acted in racist ways and have hurt people of colour, ***We repent.***

For those protesting injustice, who face police brutality and a justice system rigged against them. ***We lament.***

For those who think racism is someone else's problem, and not a problem for humanity. ***We repent.***

God of hope, show us how to work together for justice, standing up for what is right, stepping in when something is wrong, shouldering each other's burdens, holding each other accountable, righting the wrongs done, and speaking Truth to power.

We pray for lasting change, protection for protesters, a de-escalation of violence and government leaders who listen.

Deliver us from the evil of hate and intolerance, within and without, in Jesus' name we pray. **AMEN.**

## LISTEN

## In The Presence of Jehovah

### READING 2

### John 4:21–26

Jesus replied, *Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes through the Jews. But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.*

The woman said, *I know the Messiah is coming—the one who is called Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.*

Then Jesus told her, *“I am the Messiah!”*

## MESSAGE

The death of George Floyd sparked a *tsunami* of recriminations against police brutality. After his funeral, voices in the black community did not wish Floyd be made a saint or a martyr for the cause of racial justice. His past addictions and behaviour now exposed, many in the black community wanted to distance themselves from the man, while condemning the police officer who cruelly killed him.

The public conversation about George Floyd reminds me of Jimi Hendrix' song in his debut album, *Are You Experienced*, in which he sings, "***Is this love, baby, or is it just confusion?***" which expresses our dilemma at this time: are we genuinely concerned with love for another human being, or are we confused, i.e. not thinking, but simply reacting to our emotion-of-the-moment?

As a community of Christ-followers, our primary goal is to pursue Godliness, to show the world around us, what it means to be made in the image of God.

In the account of Creation, we hear God say, *Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature,...*

God **spoke** everything into existence, but He **formed** us with His hands, and **breathed** His life into us.

God then clarified our special relationship with ten simple rules which defines our relationship with Him and others, the first and guiding principle which said, *I am the only God there is! Please do not make for yourselves an idol to represent me, nor use any images of animals, birds, or fish. You must never bow to, or worship any figurative image of me - never! [I am the Creator; all these are my creation. You worship me the Creator, not what I have created, including another human being].*<sup>1</sup>

We are guilty of breaking God's first rule by describing Him in such a way that a sketch could be drawn of Him.

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 20:1-4



William Blake's *The Ancient of Days*, shows God as a white haired old *man* with human features, bending down from heaven which is surrounded by darkness (*heaven just about contains God!*) in an act of creation: two beams of light emanating from his hand. The Genesis account reads, *God spoke, 'Let there be light and light appeared [in the only place there was darkness]'*.



Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* depicts God straining to reach a man; but Genesis says, *The time came when the Lord God **formed** a man's body from the dust of the ground and breathed into it the breath of life.*

*And man became a living person.*<sup>2</sup>

We mimic God voice in booming tones; we dress in flowing robes like the artists' depict God, and we imitate God's

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<sup>2</sup> Genesis 2:7

Holiness by creating a ***purity culture***, a self-defined, self-imposed human standard, which many Christian leaders have not been able to attain nor sustain, despite their call from the pulpit to be pure.

We cannot create Holiness by assuming the role of God, nor presuming what we think God wants from us.

Our holiness is founded on Jesus' Holiness that comes only from His work on the cross.

None of us can achieve Holiness by our own will and action. The first pit stop on the journey to Holiness is repentance. We are shy to admit, we live to the standard of a god we imagined and created, for which we must ask God's forgiveness, through repentance.

Repentance is not about confessing trivial things not in the scheme of life. Repentance is about changing the focus of our lives from, *I know God; I look like Him*, to ***I need to think*** (not "***like*** God", but) ***as God does***. My mind needs to be re-balanced and centred on the person of God.

We fool ourselves about the person of God when we make God to reflect us, which is "*making an idol of God*" in **our** likeness, instead of allowing God to reflect His character in and through us - which is Godliness!

So, Godliness is not a learned behaviour, it is a mind set which desires the life of God in us above everything else.

Nor is Godliness an acquisition of skills. We cannot be Godly because we know how to be Godly!

Godliness cannot be seen or measured by family, friends and neighbours. Only God recognises God-like-ness in us when we mirror His character in our lives.

Writing to Timothy, his “true son in the faith”, Paul says, **Train yourself in godliness, for, while physical training is of some value, godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. This saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance.**<sup>3</sup>

The journey towards Godliness begins by training ourselves to make God the centre of our lives; Jesus Christ gave us a training manual (first four Gospels and the rest of the New Testament), and the Holy Spirit enables us to live this standard. As Paul says to Timothy, **train (discipline) yourself** to be a good teacher of the Word of God by studying it, not as one arguing over godless ideas and old wives’ tales.

This pursuit of Godliness, through prayer and in His Word, not only shapes our relationship with Him, but opens our understanding of the One and Only, True God, Almighty, Majestic, Eternal and loving Father.

We are, after all, made in His image!

**AMEN.**

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Timothy 4:

## PRAYER

Lord Jesus our Christ! You reached across ethnic boundaries between Samaritan, Roman and Jew, You offered fresh sight to the blind and freedom to captives, help us to break down the barriers in our community.

O God of Heaven and Earth. You created one human family and endowed each person with great dignity, Your dignity. Grant us Your strength to uproot and eliminate the blight of racism in hearts and minds, our communities, our social and civil institutions. May we not replace racism based on colour with another form of segregation, but teach us to repent of all discrimination, and grant us You wisdom to learn and to teach what it means to be *One in Christ. AMEN*

**SING**     **We are one in the Spirit**

## BENEDICTION

As Jesus sent His Disciples out into neighbourhoods and communities, so too does He send us to show our world that we are made in His image.

We go eagerly to share God's love in word and deed, without expecting a reward.

We realise will not always be made welcome. When that happens, grant us grace to move on, to the many more places that need to receive Your Word and Love.

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Lord Jesus, equip us for the journey, and may the Holy Spirit speak Truth through us, we pray. **AMEN.**

**LISTEN** to these uplifting hymns and songs as you make tea, coffee and juice and enjoy a slice of cake!

*As a member of Botley Baptist Church, please do not forget to remit your tithe and offering, either directly into the bank or drop-off your envelope at Church. If you are not attending this Church and would like to contribute to its ministry, please click "EMAIL US" at the top of the home page. Thank you*

**We bring the sacrifice of praise**

Into the house of the Lord.

We bring the sacrifice of praise

Into the house of the Lord.

And we offer up to You  
The sacrifices of thanksgiving;  
And we offer up to You  
The sacrifices of joy

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We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord

And we pray that our unity will one day be restored

And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love

Yeah they'll know we are Christians by our love

We will work with each other, we will work side by side

We will work with each other, we will work side by side

And we'll guard each man's dignity and save each man's pride

And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love

Yeah, they'll know we are Christians by our love.