

## Living to commend Christ

See service sheet online at [www.knbc.org](http://www.knbc.org)

Welcome and opening Scripture Jeremiah 10:6f

Hymn MP 327 Immortal invisible God only wise

Reading Exodus 15

Prayer

Notices BapChap,

Main reading John 13:12-17 (p.1081), 1Cor 7:20-24, (p.1148)

Ephesians 6:5-9 (p.1177), Titus 2:1-15 (p.1199)

Hymn: MP 458 Man of sorrows what a name

Sermon **Living to commend Christ**

Hymn: MP 387 Jesus we celebrate your victory

Closing Prayer

Close

Listen to today's sermon by clicking on the link at [www.knbc.org](http://www.knbc.org).

The audio file is 21\_07\_11.mp3.

*Welcome and pray*

- Tom Cruise is a famous actor, but he is also a member of L. Ron Hubbard's church of Scientology organization. He promotes Scientology.
- In the 1960's the Beatles went to India to sit at the feet of Hindu Gurus. This prompted a trail of pilgrims to journey to India. I know because my brother was one of them, looking like John Lennon with his long hair and

wire framed glasses he set off in his decked out VW van, complete with a dragon painted on the front.

- Co-founder of Hard Rock Café, the American businessman Isaac Tigrett supported/commended Sai Baba, the South Indian self-professed Divine.
- At University there were those who recommended Transcendental Meditation to me and I was drawn in for a while.

Who or what do you / are you commending to others?

- In the US Mrs Mary Arnold in her hospitality and whole demeanor commended Jesus Christ to me as she spoke to me of Christ one day.
- A little later when travelling like a lost sheep in the US I met Ken and Marcia Brown. They spoke of Christ and commended him to me. They spoke of him and by their lives - commended him to me.

Paul here v9,10 writes to slaves that their lives should **in every way make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive**. In other words, they should live in such a way as to commend Christ to their masters and all those around.

Thus the title this morning is "**Living to commend Christ**." That is to live in a way that attracts people to Jesus Christ. As a Christian it is now my job to commend Christ to others, - and if you profess Christ's Name - then it is your calling to.

*Slavery intro*

Slavery was a fact of life in the Roman Empire. Slaves and servants were an essential component in Roman society. In Italy particularly there were large numbers of slaves, less so in the colonies.. Many worked in the fields, on imperial estates, in commerce or as domestic servant in the home. They were allowed their freed sometimes in exchange for a fee.

The NT states clearly and unambiguously that slave trading was evil: Paul lists slave traders among the "**lawbreakers and rebels**" 1 Tim. 1:9-10, and trading in the "**bodies and souls of men**" Rev. 18:13 is included in the list of activities of "Babylon the Great" (a symbol for Rome) that would lead to its destruction.

The essence of NT teaching was not to tell slaves to break flee or run off, but that they should stay where they are and be obedient to their masters.

Paul says **Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you**— This is important because he says it in v17, v20 and again in v24. However, Paul does say **although if you can gain your freedom, do so**. 1 Cor. 7:20,21.

God also tells masters to treat their slaves with dignity and respect, in essence recognising their humanity. Even more radical was Paul's insistence on the spiritual and moral equality of all people since in Christ, **there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female** Gal. 3:28. It is hard for us to appreciate how remarkable this teaching was in the first century. Slaves were seen as being intrinsically inferior, "living tools" is Aristotle's memorable phrase. The teaching of the NT could not be more different from the prevailing views of the wider culture.

With the collapse of Roman authority in the Western half of the Empire slavery began a slow decline in Europe. This was due to the influence of Christianity which emphasised the sanctity of every life as having been created equal by God.

Sadly, since sin entered the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve - man's innate desire to exploit his fellow man has meant that slavery, in its many ugly forms, has been rife across the world ever since.

However, before we get caught up into 'slavery' per se please note the word for slave is 'doulos' x2 which is also translated **servant** or **bondservant**. This includes house servants, employees and anyone in some form of servitude or obligated to another whether contracted or not. Thus the word is also used metaphorically for one who gives himself up to another's will.

### *Christian slaves*

Many of those who came to faith and joined the church were from the poor. That was God's good purpose. When the disciples went out to preach about the kingdom of God: **Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, prayed, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure."** Lu 10:21. The church was mainly made up of the less powerful, the less educated, those at the lower levels of society. Many in the church were slaves. - There was no Sunday off then!

Slaves were everywhere and their conduct was open for all to see. After all living in a house with others makes it impossible to hide your life - all eyes are on you!

Being in servitude was hard, the result was often resentment resulting in a bad attitude. The slave would be slow to respond to the master's orders, they would drag their feet, they would do the minimum required, making them all but useless.

This is not just true of slaves and servants. Every manager of employees or contract workers knows how miserable it is when someone doesn't want to work.

- At the MOT station on Thursday, I said to the boss busily rushing around "you are a busy man getting involved in all the detail" to which he said of the mechanics "Getting them to work that's the problem"

You can make all the laws you like but if they want to skive they'll find a way.

In our passage Paul mentions two areas particularly: servants should **not to talk back** to their masters - and servants should **not steal from them**.

Grumbling, complaining, back chat, giving them lip as far as they could get away with - comes from a heart that says "no I don't want to do it" x2

Then there's the other area which servants are prone to fall into - theft.

- Carers are increasingly caught out stealing from those they are to help. Mother still now bemoans the loss of the gold around a little book she has.

The slave Onesimus, mentioned in the Bible book Philemon, probably ran away because he was a thief, he stole from his master.

### *Finding Christ*

But then that slave hears of Christ and turns to Him. That moment there is a change - all would know something's happened to them. Also true of you?

✚ There should be a huge difference, in action and attitude.

- The story goes of a mother despairing of getting her son to smarten up, to look after himself, to wear clean and tidy clothes and generally make some effort to look respectable. Then one day, with no word from her, everything changed, suddenly he was smart, clean, and always pruning himself. What caused this dramatic change? You got it, a girl.

How many servants and slaves had their master despairing of them, no amount of urging, persuading, beatings, etc. could make any real change.

Then Christ comes -and bang everything changes - not driven by a stick but by love. A new heart and a new action motivated by love.

Now Paul can say **9 Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, - and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted.**

Paul is saying how slaves should live for they are not now just serving their masters alone- but serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul says to the slaves at Colossae **Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.** Col 3:23,24

Want a difference it makes when it is done for the Lord and pleasing to him. Jesus addressed this in his Sermon on the mount. When he said: **If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.** Mt 5:41. Roman law required anyone, when asked, to carry a load for one mile, - as did **Simon of Cyrene** - Can you imagine the grumbling and complaining "how much further can I put it down now?" Not for those who follow Christ, we do it for him, one mile? I will go two miles gladly and willingly - why not even more?

✚ **Jesus Christ makes people different. Christians are to be different.**

Take giving jobs to people in the church for example. I would give a job to someone already busy and willing (they will do it). For others it's harder to say - you know they really don't want to do it, there would be a reason, a 'can't do it' attitude. If they were to do it - it would be done with a sigh.

Let me remind you this whole letter to Titus is that Christians are to **do good.**

■

A servant who won't work is useless, a servant who cannot be trusted is a liability. I wonder how many house owners were afraid to leave their homes and when they did wondered what would be stolen.

A Christian servant or slave is to be quite different; trustworthy, reliable, willing... Remember Joseph who was put in charge in the prison because of his exemplary conduct. Remember Daniel given high office - other tried to **"find grounds for charges against him in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent."** Da 6:4.

**The King valued Daniel - A servant like that is worth his weight in gold.**

A servant is a servant because he has to be - he may not be servant hearted.

A Christian servant is a servant because he has to be - but he is servant hearted. He or she has a different attitude. It is a Christ-like attitude.

Daniel was a high ranking official - and yet he was servant hearted.

■ I have meet those who are Christians in positions of authority and they are servant hearted, those with wealth and they are generous hearted.

God has placed you where he wants you to be: geographically, and socially, it will be different for every one - what he wants to see is a servant heart, a Christ-like heart. That your life will be so attractive it will point people to X

*Our example is Christ; the suffering servant.*

He is the **Son of Man** who **did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**" Mt 20:26-28. Isaiah 42:1 says **"here is my servant"**, Christ is the suffering servant, it is he who **made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.** Php 2:7.

It is Jesus who knelt down and washed the disciples' dirty, smelly feet, and then gets up and says **"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."** John 13:15-17

*All who follow him are now his bondservant*

If you are to follow Christ to glory then you are to serve - and most likely suffer for Him - that is what his followers are called to do - and do gladly.

It is not to run away and seek a better life for myself, NO, but seek Christ to help me where I now am. **Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.** 1Co 7:22-24.

**For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price;** 1Co 7:22-24.

Adam and Eve broke off from the joyful service of a wonderful and good God whose ways are perfect. They thought they were breaking free and sought to take God's place making themselves Lord and God. They wanted to serve their own ends and to be the master of their own destinies.

How foolish they were - What they didn't bargain on is that when a man or woman sins they become a slave. You become a slave to sin.

**Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.** Joh 8:34

It does not immediately seem that way. Given time it becomes obvious that the swearer, the sexually immoral or the greedy man or woman becomes trapped in it, like an addiction you become hooked. There is a force at work, the sinner/slave cannot serve Christ or do what is good, he is bonded to another, another one who has mastery over him, one cruel and hateful.

**for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.** 2Pe 2:19

Do not expect someone who is not Born Again, not freed from sin through the forgiveness that Christ purchased on the cross to be able to love and

obey God. They might try hard with their actions to give that impression - but the truth is they can't and - they don't / won't want to.

✚ **Have you sought Christ to free those bonds of sin? To pull you free?**

The Cross is there, Christ's heart is ready to receive every repentant sinner.

✚ **Christ really is the father looking out for the wayward son to head towards Him. Christ can set you free and then you will be really free.**

Remember when Paul was in prison in Philippi? Having been whipped, in that dark and dingy deep interior of the jail. There clamped in stocks, at midnight Paul and Silas together sing hymns to God.

There is an earthquake and the jailer thinking they are escaping rushes in but Paul says "don't worry we are here". To which the jailer replies: "**What can I do to be saved**". He is amazed, it suddenly dawns on him that it is really he who is in prison - and Paul despite his chains - is the free man. He can see Paul is free so he says **what can I do to be free or to be saved**. There are some here this morning still in the prison of sin and self, you cannot break out, you must ask what the same question "what can I do to be saved. The answer for him – and for you - is simply this: "**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved**" Ac 16:31 **Christ is still able and willing to save sinners**

To know the freedom of forgiveness of your sin you must turn away from them - and declare that Christ's is Lord, not you – and acknowledge his right lordship over your life. Have you done that? Is he now your master? Are you His servant? - the one who made you and has every right over you? If Christ has paid for your sins and has bought you with his own blood shed on the cross for you a law-breakers - then you are now Christ's bondservant.

A Christian is someone **set free from sin and** now a **slave to righteousness**. Ro 6:18

Paul wrote his letters to Timothy and Titus from prison in Rome. "**So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God,**" 2Ti 1:8 **his prisoner** - he does not say a prisoner of the Romans but **his prisoner** Christ's prisoner.

✚ **Christians now serve a new master - we are Christ willing slaves**

This is a teaching largely lost in the church today. Where is servanthood? Where is the cheerful giving of time and energy? We are "**saved to serve**". Instead there is often a resistance to being told what to do - or to submit to others and to serve others and the cause of Christ and thus commend him.

Submission is a beautiful testimony to Jesus: "**Jesus called his disciples together and said, "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."**" Mt 20:26-28

*Witnesses now*

Slaves were everywhere and their conduct was open for all to see. So the many slaves and servants who became Christians were in a unique position to witness for Christ. Thus Paul says they should live out their new Godly life: **so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive.**

Remember the Iranian Christian Mojtaba imprisoned in the notorious Evin prison. He says the Lord taught him that the only way the many inside would hear the gospel would be if a Christian was placed inside. He realized that was God's will for him, he would now sacrifice his all for Jesus. "I never prayed for God to release me from prison," Mojtaba says. "It doesn't matter what situation I'm in, I can work in God's kingdom wherever God places me. It doesn't matter if it is in prison or out of prison. Because persecution will take the gospel to the places where nothing else can do it."

✚ **Though behind bars – he was free. Free to live and commend Christ.**

A servant looks to the masters interests first. Some saved in poor countries and able to go to a bible college in the West – many stay and never go back. Christians undergoing persecution or caught up in a civil war have a real tension: should they leave their country or remain and be the Lord's person? These slaves were to make the **teaching about God our Saviour attractive**. So that those who previously did not view Christ as worth considering - now do so – they do so because of the witness of their slaves godly lives  
Becoming a Christian is not a cue to run off to somewhere else.

■ **Mark at the workplace he is Christ's man there among the many men.**  
✚ **I say to every Christian here - Do people see Christ in a better light as they see your life?**

■ **Those who stop in the Open Air because they have been in the hostel.**  
■ **Ken and Marcia Brown who spoke to me those years ago strongly commended Christ to me - it wasn't just words it by their Godly lives**

Be faithful to your calling - As a Christian you are called to be a salt and light were you are. God knows what he is doing. \_\_\_\_\_END