

Happenings at Balham: March 2016

Aiming higher by God's grace

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NIV

At the moment the big story in the news is the upcoming European referendum and all knives seem to be out. Politicians who seemed to be friends or at least political allies seem now to have no problem ridiculing each other and calling each other names. The Prime Minister has no qualms about taking the mickey of his ex-Eaton, ex-Oxford ally Boris Johnson. Boris has no issues with hitting back. People have no problem with telling half-truths about the dangers of voting to leave the EU as the gloves come off in this political fight. What about honesty and respecting each other? Some will argue it is politics. I guess that's why I personally think it's difficult to maintain Christian ethics and be a front-line politician, although I'm sure some will disagree with me on this.

When we think about 'worldliness' many are tempted to go into overdrive in discussing dress, the music we listen to, the places we go for entertainment and even what we watch or listen to in our homes. Whether we are considered worldly is often dependent on how they think we fare against these 'tests' that they have set up. However a broader definition of worldliness is how we fare in thought, attitude and action against the principles of God and included in this is how honest and trustworthy we are in a world where other values, such as 'getting on in life', sometimes conflicts with living the way God expects of us whilst we are living in a sinful world.

Look how the Bible defines love in the text above. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Matthew 5:44 (KJV) goes even deeper, admonishing us **to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute you. That you may be children of your Father in heaven.**

Patient, kind, do not dishonour others, do not be easily angered - How do the politicians fighting one another match up with that, or more to the point how do we, who are called by God's name, match up to that? It is probably easier to get into battles about what we eat, wear or listen to as measures of our Christianity, than to think about whether our conduct matches up to what God expects of us, or better still whether our attitudes and motives are Godly.

Many people in the world eat healthily, are embarrassed by the lyrics of Hip Hop artists and dress modestly but it is another level to not envy, not be self-seeking and proud, not to keep records of those people have wronged us and to rejoice in being truthful when telling 'white lies' to cover ourselves or get on in the workplace and society at large is commonplace. What about loving our enemies? I mean, really? The principles of Godly living is at variance with the world and that is why they hated and killed the Jesus, who we claim to serve,

I don't believe that God would ask us to do something that is impossible for us to do through his strength, so when we read the high principles of God, we need to ask him to give us the strength we need to live up to it and the change of heart so that we will want to. The politicians are striving for some worldly honour and recognition but we need to set our sights higher by God's grace.

Looking back at February 2016

Family and Evangelism were key features this month. We held a Family Emphasis week, and on the two Sabbaths the emphasis was on building relationships and included a lively discussion and presentation on marriage by the husband and wife leadership team of the Family Ministries Department and a prayer meeting lead out by another family.

As far as outreach is concerned not only did we have our monthly street witnessing but we dropped cards into the doors of our neighbours during Family Emphasis Week highlighting the importance of families. We also started to prepare for our door-to-door efforts that will happen around Mother's Day with a training session.

Another feature for the month was the second music training workshop of the year, as we seek to excel in our music during our worship services.

Key dates for your diary (March 2016)

Sabbath 5th March: Women's Day of Prayer

Theme: Women of Value with guest preacher Judy Clements

AYS, 5.30pm includes interviews with mothers and daughters and special musical items.

Sabbath 5th March: Mother's Day gift distribution and Baptism

The afternoon, from 3pm, gives us an opportunity to go door-to-door and present gifts to the mothers in our neighbourhood. This will be followed by a baptism at 4.30pm.

Sabbath 12th March: Communion Service

This is another opportunity to celebrate the sacrifice made for us and the promise of Christ's return. We will be joined and ministered to by a Deaf Ministries Choir from Lewisham Church during this service.

Sabbath 12th March: Street Witnessing

At 3.30pm we will be hitting Balham High Road again by singing (spearheaded by the Balham Gospel Choir) and giving out leaflets to the passers-by and sharing the gospel with them.

Friday 18th - Sunday 20th March: SEC Worship Leader's conference - bringing together church leaders, musicians and praise teams from around the Conference. The sessions will be lead by a world-renowned music director and worship leader. For more details including registration and costs see www.secworshipleaders.com

Sunday 20th March - Sabbath 26th March: Youth week of Prayer

Sessions are: Sunday- time tbc, Monday - Friday (except Thursday), 7pm

Stephen Fuller will be the main speaker for this week as the youth, supported by the wider church, come together for prayer and worship.

Sunday 27th March: Start of the ADRA-UK Ingathering campaign

The annual effort to raise funds for the world's needy is here again and people are depending on us. www.adra.org.uk

