

3rd September, 2023

The paper-version Service



To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service.



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Song:

What gift of grace is Jesus, my redeemer;
there is no more for heaven now to give.
He is my joy, my righteousness and freedom,
my steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace.
To this I hold: my hope is only Jesus,
for my life is wholly bound to his.
O, how strange and divine, I can sing:
all is mine!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me.

The night is dark but I am not forsaken,
for by my side the Saviour he will stay;
I labour on in weakness and rejoicing,
for in my need his power is displayed.
To this I hold: my Shepherd will defend me;
through the deepest valley he will lead.
O, the night has been won and I shall overcome!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me.

No fate I dread: I know I am forgiven,
the future sure, the price it has been paid;
for Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon
and he was raised to overthrow the grave.
To this I hold: my sin has been defeated!
Jesus now and ever is my plea;
O, the chains are released; I can sing: I am free!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me.

With every breath I long to follow Jesus,
for he has said that he will bring me home;
and day by day I know he will renew me
until I stand with joy before the throne.
To this I hold: my hope is only Jesus,
all the glory evermore to him;
when the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat:
'Yet not I, but through Christ in me!'

The Sermon by Rev. Howard Wright.

Read Romans 12:1-8 Matthew 16:21-28: Follow Jesus.

Today we begin a new Series. Looking at Jesus, his words and deeds as recorded in the later part of Matthew's Gospel.

Verse 21 of our Matthew reading begins, *'From that time...'*, from what time? Jesus' disciples have twigged who Jesus is: *'Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.'* A staggering statement (Matthew 16:16)

Messiah means, Anointed One. In Jewish understanding, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed and Jesus is the fulfilment of all of these. *The Prophet* declaring fully God's word. *The Priest*, representing us to God, and God to us. And *The King*, the sovereign and holy God among us.

It's this same declaration about Jesus that gets Jesus crucified – as it's a declaration that Jesus is God! See Matthew 26:63-66

Read Matthew 16:21. *The Messiah*, this Messiah, comes as *the* suffering servant (see Isaiah 53) and not the fully expected conquering King – at least not yet!

Peter, and the other disciples struggled to comprehend this. They thought Jesus was their ticket to victory and freedom over the Romans. If Jesus is the Messiah, the son of the living God, they knew what God had done in the past, the glorious battles he'd won for his people, surely this is the same.

Peter was confused. The suffering servant king was not in his thinking. This confusion continues even today, see, 1 Corinthians 1:22-24. But probably even less in Peter's thinking was that he would have to suffer, see v.24.

'Disciples' of our world, followers of fashion, don't carry crosses or welcome suffering. Today most would pursue happiness, and avoid carrying baggage.

Pleasure is pursued in home, relationships, luxuries and physical pleasures. We are encouraged to indulge the 'self', be yourself, or create yourself, or sacrifice yourself to someone else's self (a child, spouse,

parent). But Jesus calls us to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him.

Paul's words in Romans 12:1-2 are parallel with Jesus' call. This is so different to pursue happiness, or find, or create self. Jesus says pursue him.

See 16:25-27. Pursue the world and it's pleasures and lose your soul. There's nothing wrong in creating a home, in relationships, or even physical pleasures but if they become our passion and direction, that's idolatry. And if we pursue these at a cost to others, enjoying our riches at the expense of the poor and vulnerable that's injustice. And if we make our own rules about what's right and acceptable it become immorality.

So what are we pursuing and what are we carrying? What does our diary, our bank statements, the books we read, the TV we watch, the websites we visit, and apps on our phones, indicate our priorities are? And what would others observe about us?

Paul warns us – see Romans 12:2, and Jesus says our very souls are at stake.

Following Jesus is the best – but it's not always easy. We are to pick up our cross and follow Jesus' example, and as Paul writes, in response to Christ's love we follow. It is, in view of God's mercy, that we offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

Jesus makes clear there are rewards, the 'crown', for service – don't risk missing out.

Paul says that in our submission to God we find ourselves able, *'to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.'* (Romans 12:2). Note, *'his good, pleasing and perfect will.'* It's a wonderful thing to pursue Jesus and carry our cross. We were made to live for Jesus and with Jesus, using our energies and abilities (See Romans 12:6-8) to worship/serve the Messiah, the anointed Prophet, Priest and King, Son of the living God! So let's follow...

Prayers: *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:4-6)*



- Pray for this day, and the coming week.
- Pray for justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, neighbours, and for family & friends.
- Pray for the Church.

Collect: Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity: *Almighty God, who called your Church to bear witness that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself: help us to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may be drawn to you; through him who was lifted up on the cross, and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

The Lord's Prayer: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.*

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, The Good Shepherd, the communities around us and our whole nation. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

The Notices: We are now holding services in the building on Sundays at 8am and 9.30am, and are live streaming the 9.30 service. This Paper Service will continue for the moment and is generally available the week after the service.

- Tea and Chat & Bowls: Wed. 20th Sept. at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: Wed. 27th Sept at 11am, in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise, for Harvest: Sunday October 1st at 3pm in Church.
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays.
- COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.