

5th March, 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



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

Sunday's Service.

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:

O Lord my God, when I in awesome
wonder
Consider all the worlds Thy hands have
made
I see the stars, I hear the rolling
thunder
Thy power throughout the universe
displayed

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to
Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou
art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to
Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou
art!

And when I think, that God, His Son not
sparing
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in
That on the Cross, my burden gladly
bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to
Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou
art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to
Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou
art!

When Christ shall come, with shout of
acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill
my heart
Then I shall bow, in humble adoration
And then proclaim: "My God, how
great Thou art!"
Thy power throughout the universe
displayed

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to
Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou
art.
How great Thou art, how great Thou
art.

The Sermon by Rev. Brian Pritchard: By Praise and Worship

Read Ephesians 5:8 – 20 and Matthew 21:12 – 16

Our theme today, within the series Growing Deeper and Growing larger, is ‘by praise and worship’. This is far more than what and how we sing.

It is about our response to the love of God. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6 ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind; and your neighbour as yourself’. This reflects the first of the 10 Commandments: ‘I am the Lord – you shall have no other Gods but me. You shall not make yourself an idol You shall not bow down to them or worship them’ Our worship has to be of God alone.

Psalm 29: 2: Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; bow down before him, his glory proclaim.

Many times in the Bible we read the command to be holy: 1 Peter 1: 15 and 16: “But just as he who called you is **holy**, so be **holy** in all you do; for it is written: “Be **holy**, because I am **holy**.”

Our calling is to transform the world, not to conform to the world. Ephesians 5: 8: ‘You are light in the Lord - live as children of light’. Our Christmas readings remind us that the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light – that the Light has come into the world – and we, who have formerly been darkness, must be light-bearers in God’s world. To be holy, as God is holy, means to become light. Eph 5: 11: ‘Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness – expose them’. If we go back just a few verses in Eph 5, to vs 3-4 Paul calls out some deeds of darkness and in vs 5 labels those who do these things as idolaters. The greedy person wants ‘things’ more than he wants God, and puts things in place of God – thereby committing idolatry.

Idols are gods of our own creation. Think of our modern culture – wealth, status, a person or thing that is greatly admired, loved, or revered. A soccer team or idol. Pop idols. Anything that is not capable of fulfilling our hope—that is, anything other than God—is an idol, whether or not it is a physical object.

We try to bring God down to our level, to make the God we believe in fit with our culture, but this is not the holy God of the Bible, the God as revealed by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The pressures of life and the voices of the crowd can eat away at our faith commitment. To refashion God to conform with the spirit of the age is idolatry.

To give greater priority to idols – physical idols, people, activities – than to the Lord God Almighty, the Holy God, is sin. We live in a time that trivialises the

holiness of God, and trivialises the seriousness of sin. Psalm 95: “Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker; for he is our God” . Hebrews 12: 28 “let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire”.

To turn to idols – in whatever form – is folly. We are called to be holy, to be light. To be transformed, to be more Christ-like. False worship – the worship of idols (that’s what we do when we give ‘honour’ to those people and things we ‘idolise’) – destroys life because we find ourselves becoming more and more like what we idolise.

The antidote to false worship is true worship – worship of the one true God. We are to love the Lord God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind; and our neighbour as yourself.

Paul reminds us that we should be very careful how we live. We are to make the most of every opportunity to live for God in an evil environment and we are to live in full understanding of the Lord’s will, living filled with the Spirit. Contrast Philippians 4: 8 with the verses immediately before today’s passage – avoid the things of today’s culture such as sexual immorality and obscenity. We are to make a transforming difference.

Our lives should be lives of worship. Paul tells us to sing and make music from our heart to the Lord. This singing is the ultimate antidote to living in the darkness of the immorality which surrounds us. It has to be a conscious singing, recognising we are – or should be – walking in the light of the Messiah and not down the literal or metaphorical dark alleys that lead to sin and death.

We are to worship God – the God revealed in Jesus – who so loves us that he gave his son for us, so that we may have life. We need to know and be able to tell the story into today’s ‘culture’ of the creator God who through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the Prophets, through our history of redemption from creation to new creation, declared his love for us and who, in that great love, sent his son who entered our world, showed us signs of the kingdom of God, took the penalty for all our sin when he died on the cross, then was raised to life, raised to heaven, to give us hope of eternal life. It is in Jesus that we see the pain that our sin has caused, yet he demonstrates to us his incredible love. To see our God of mercy, who loves like that, should surely be the fuel for the true praise and worship our God deserves. This is the only antidote to false worship of idols, idols who take from us, drain us, and give us nothing in return – when our God has given us his all.



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: Third Sunday of Lent. Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer: *Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new: transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.*
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. 15th March at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: 22nd March at 11am in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise for Easter, 3pm Sunday April 2nd.
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays. COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.