

19th 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 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:

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall
rise to thee.

Holy, holy, holy, merciful and
mighty!
God in three persons, blessed
Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints
adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns
around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling
down before thee,
which wert and art and evermore
shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the
darkness hide thee,
though the eye of sinful man thy
glory may not see,
only thou art holy; there is none
beside thee,
perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name
in earth, and sky and sea.
Holy, holy, holy! merciful and
mighty!
God in three persons, blessed
Trinity!



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

The Sermon by Rev. Jonathan Rooke: In the power of the Holy Spirit
Read Ephesians 2:13-22 and Matthew 3:1-12

1. We need to keep repenting and redirecting our life.

John-the-Baptist is an old friend to many of us. Many of us have met him regularly during Lent as we retell the story of Jesus' love for us. John-the-Baptist has wild hair and rough brown clothes with a massive belt around his waist and he eats wild honey and locusts. I don't really know what he looked like but I am pretty sure he was a strong personality, fearlessly proclaiming truths about God and communicating to the Jews messages for them that come from God. We find him in our passage boldly telling people that their heritage as people of the Israelite nation is no longer enough for God. God is moving, God is doing something new and they need to change their ways. He calls Jews to the river Jordan to be baptised. Jesus himself comes to be baptised. John-the-Baptist asks people to repent and then bear fruit worthy of repentance.

Repenting is something that Christians have to do every day. It is the way we enter into the new life that God has for us each day. And every day is precious.

Repentance is the translation of the Greek word *Metanoia*. It means a change of mind, a change of heart and a change of outlook. Being a Christian requires us to constantly adjust and transform our minds, our hearts and our outlook.

When we repent we are changing direction and turning away from self-idolatry. The Christian journey can be described as wrestling ourselves away from concern for ourselves, our needs, our plans and removing ourselves from the centre of our lives. It is a struggle to let God be God in us. Repentance is letting God free us from self-preoccupation. Our sin is refusing, or fearing, to turn towards God either because we are quite content with ourselves as we are or because we think we must first put ourselves in order before we can turn to him. God is love, continuously drawing us to himself.

How do we know if we are truly repenting? We will be free-er from self-preoccupation, we will trust more in God's goodness working in us and there will be a deeper joy or peace and an inner freedom. Richard Rohr says

repentance is not so much about appeasing a God who rewards and punishes external behaviour as a change of mind, an interior change of inner motivation and intention that largely happens in secret 'where your father who sees all that is done in secret and can reward you' (Matthew 6). Repentance is not so much about climbing up to God as it is about letting go of ourselves and letting God in so we can be fully human.

John-the-Baptist knows that repentance is followed by God's gift to us of the Holy Spirit.

2. We need live our life with the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit connects Father and Son and you and I. We might say, the Holy Spirit is the love that enables us to love God, ourselves and others as God wants us to. John-the-Baptist in our passage says 'Bear fruit worthy of repentance'. The fruits of the Holy Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5).

When we repent we clear space to invite the Holy Spirit to work in our lives, with our strengths and our weaknesses and to grow the fruits.

One fruit of the Holy Spirit is love. The Holy Spirit enables us to love. This is a love that is an act of will, wanting the good of the other and wanting to do something about it for them. A love that wants to serve others.

Another fruit is joy and another is peace. Bishop Robert Barron describes these fruits as a sense of wellbeing, a deep connection to God at the depth of our souls - a serenity reassuring us that we can endure the changes and challenges of this life and experience a peace given by God.

Another fruit is generosity and it is the voice each morning that asks "what occasions are there for me this day to love others?"

Repentance creates space for the fruits of the Holy Spirit to grow.

What difference could the Holy Spirit make to your life and those around you this week?

Dear Lord,

Help us to repent this week. Help us to make space for the Holy Spirit and bear fruit. Amen

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: Fourth Sunday of Lent. Merciful Lord, absolve your people from their offences, that through your bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the chains of those sins which by our frailty we have committed; grant this, heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour, 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. 19th April at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: 22nd March, 26th April 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.