

26th November, 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:

How sweet the name of Jesus
sounds
in a believer's ear!
It soothes our sorrows, heals our
wounds,
and drives away our fear.

It makes the wounded spirit whole
and calms the troubled breast;
'tis manna to the hungry soul,
and to the weary, rest.

Jesus, shepherd, guardian, friend,
my Prophet, Priest, and King,
my Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
accept the praise I bring.



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

The Sermon by Jane Hughes

Read Matthew 25:31-46 – Jesus' Way

We are perfectly positioned to be Jesus in our community

Earlier in Matthews Gospel we hear the kingdom of heaven described through the parables of the wheat and weeds (Matthew 13:24-30) and the parable of the good and bad fish (Matthew 13:47-52). In todays Gospel we hear again Jesus speaking about the time of final judgement, but this time he gives much more detail about on what we will be judged.

When we read

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

and

“when you do this for the very least of these you do it for me”

for some of us this might literally mean visiting prisons, feeding the hungry or clothing those in need

but for most of us, now in this moment - here today what does this passage mean?

Today's reading gives clear instructions how to live Jesus' way. Jesus calls us to live differently to the culture around us, which often focusses on self rather than others. Often, we can feel powerless to make changes to the world and lives of people around us. What difference can one person make?

During the service on Sunday everyone was asked to think about the connections they had with their families and community, through daily contact, phone calls, social groups, work etc.

We thought about how we are all perfectly positioned by God to be his hands and feet in our communities, and how we are called to be disciples to make disciples.

Take a moment to reflect on all those you connect with, whether daily, weekly or occasionally, consider those too who you haven't connected with for a while. You might want to write a list or draw the connections as we did in Church on Sunday.

We can be Jesus in our community, it doesn't matter if we are tired, confused or uncertain, young or old, if we have known God for a long time or this relationship is still new,

Read again verses 34-36 (the sheep) and verses 41-43 (the goats) and think about what your list would look like? Think about the times you have helped others in need or have been helped and create your own version of verses 34-36,

Paul in Ephesians talks about how we are created in Christ Jesus to do good works

Ephesians 2 8:1

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

And James has a lot to say about Faith without deeds

James 2:14-17

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

James 2:26

As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

And John too in his letters speaks of love as actions

1 John 3:17-18

If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

As Christians we are saved by God's free gift of Grace but God's Grace does not cancel our debt to obey him. Following the greatest commandment to Love God with all our heart, soul and mind and then to love our neighbours (Matthew 22:37-39). We can love others because God first loved us and we have been perfectly positioned by God to love those around us. But we have also been called by God, sent By Christ and equipped by the Holy spirit to Go and Make disciples, to be disciples that make disciples. (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark: 16:15 and Acts 1:8)

We are perfectly positioned by God to not only be Jesus in our community, offering help and comfort, sharing in people's everyday lives but we are also perfectly positioned to tell others about Jesus, we can help those around us to connect with God in the everyday moments we meet with them.

First Sunday before Advent: *Eternal Father, whose Son Jesus Christ ascended to the throne of heaven that he might rule over all things as Lord and King: keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit and in the bond of peace, and bring the whole created order to worship at his feet; 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: *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 Praise for Christmas: 3pm on Sunday 3rd December.**
- Christmas Party for Chatters, Bowlers and Coffee & Questioners: Wed. Dec 20th at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: Jan 24th at 11am, in Church Hall.
- Carol Services: 5pm and 7pm December 17th.
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays.
- COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.