

7th May, 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:

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art.

Thou my best Thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word;
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Be Thou my battle Shield, Sword for the fight;
Be Thou my Dignity, Thou my Delight;



Thou my soul's Shelter, Thou my high Tower:
Raise Thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.

High King of Heaven, my victory won,
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

The Sermon by Rev. Howard Wright: The King's design, Matthew 5:17-26.

Our king was crowned at Westminster Abbey yesterday. There was much in the service that pointed to the King of Kings, the real power behind the throne.

During the service King Charles was given a Bible with the words: *'the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is Wisdom; This is the royal Law; These are the lively Oracles of God.'*

Charles has expressed his hopes and values for his monarchy and similarly, these are both a continuation of his mother's values and a fresh interpretation. Here in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) Jesus declares his values and design for life. In today's passage he states the continuation of the Old Testament Law and a fresh interpretation. Jesus says: *'Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.'*

Jesus fulfils the law! On the cross he satisfies the law for us. Jesus death, satisfies the law's requirements. He is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29, see Romans 6:23 and 2 Corinthians 5:21)

The seriousness of sin has not changed, see v.19. The law remains 'the standard' for our righteousness. God made the world good, go make it better, not ruin it! Sin is vile, it destroys, and kills what God has made good, and the law shows up sin.

Jesus says that, *'unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. (v.20).'*

The Pharisees, were famous for their obedience to all the commandments. They were the *proper* Christians, they knew their 'Bible' and would have memorised whole Old Testament! But they risked losing it all. They were not life giving and enabling, but restrictive. They looked good on the outside, and demanded much from others, but inside they were as proud, greedy, proud, selfish, mean, and unkind as any. They didn't make the world better, but in breach of 'love your neighbour' (Leviticus 19:18) and despite their own shortcomings were condemning and oppressive toward others. To the Pharisees, the letter was more important than the spirit.

In the following passages, Jesus illustrates how we are to live, like Pharisees, in obedience to the law, but, unlike the Pharisees, also with life-giving attitudes and behaviour. Jesus outlines the continuation and fresh, or

perhaps proper and original, interpretation of the law. And he starts with murder.

To willingly take the life of another is truly terrible thing. Dreadful to the person murdered, and devastating in the impact upon others. But it also destroys those who kill, Harry Potter author, J K Rowling, was not wrong to speak of the act of murder as shattering our own souls.

All sin, and here murder, is a serious thing and ruins what God has called good. But Jesus takes this further than people had grasped from the Old Testament law, and says that an attitude towards another of contempt for ('Raca'), or speaking ill of ('fool'), is as awful!

Toxic thoughts, words, and behaviours towards another risk terrible damage to them – it can be so oppressive to live with the knowledge of others wishing ill for you. We may say it doesn't bother us – sticks and stones – but most of us have been affected by negative opinions of us and unkind actions toward us.

And holding hatred toward another, impacts our own souls, as someone said about unforgiveness and grudges, it's like drinking poison ourselves whilst hoping it hurts the other person.

We are, as far as it depends on us, to live at peace with everyone (Romans 12:18). But, how do we stay away from murderous behaviour and attitudes? How can our righteousness surpass the Pharisees?

To avoid something negative, it's usually best to do something positive. Jesus says, blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God (5:9). We need to be bringers of peace.

Jesus brings peace, read Colossians 1:19-20 and Romans 5:8-9. How can we be people of peace?

- Read Psalm 37:7, take time to talk with and listen to (wait on) God and not seek our own 'revenge'.
- Read Ephesians 4:31-32. Reflect upon the forgiveness you have received and be grateful for your own salvation.
- Pray for help. King Charles prayed: *God of compassion and mercy whose Son was sent not to be served but to serve, give grace that I may find in thy service perfect freedom and in that freedom knowledge of thy truth. Grant that I may be a blessing to all thy children, of every faith and conviction, that together we may discover the ways of gentleness and be led into the paths of peace through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*
- Be a first responder, see vs.23-26. Go and be reconciled.

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: Fifth Sunday of Easter: Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: grant that, as by your grace going before us you put into our minds good desires, so by your continual help we may bring them to good effect; through Jesus Christ our risen 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. 17th May at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: 24th May at 11am in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise TBA.
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays.
- COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.