

12th February, 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:

Crown him with many crowns,
the Lamb upon his throne.
Hark! how the heavenly anthem
drowns
all music but its own.

Awake, my soul, and sing
of him who died for thee,
and hail him as thy matchless king
through all eternity.

Crown him the Lord of life,
who triumphed o'er the grave,
and rose victorious in the strife
for those he came to save;
his glories now we sing
who died and rose on high,
who died eternal life to bring,
and lives that death may die.

Crown him the Lord of love;
behold his hands and side,
rich wounds, yet visible above,
in beauty glorified;

no angels in the sky
can fully bear that sight,
but downward bends their burning eye
at mysteries so bright.

Crown Him the Lord of peace,
Whose power a scepter sways
From pole to pole that wars may cease,
And all be prayer and praise.
His reign shall know no end,
And round His pierced feet
Fair flowers of glory now extend
Their fragrance ever sweet.

Crown him the Lord of years,
the potentate of time,
creator of the rolling spheres,
ineffably sublime.
All hail, Redeemer, hail!
for thou hast died for me;
thy praise shall never, never fail
throughout eternity.



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

The Sermon by Rev Howard Wright: Responding Generously

Last week, we reflected how that in Responding to God's love, we live hope-fully. This week, we consider how we respond generously.

God gives generously to us. In our Matthew reading, the vineyard owner is generous to all. In creation God is generous to us. He gives us more than we need and provides us with overwhelming variety in nature. Not just roses but peonies! God gives us salvation, at great cost to himself, that it might be free for us – such grace! Read 1 John 3:1. God gives generously, everything for us. An old hymn states it: *'Thou who wast rich beyond all splendour, all for love's sake becamest poor.'* Read Romans 8:32.

In response to God's generosity, we are commanded us to be generous. Read Deuteronomy 15:10. The Message translation of the Bible puts Ecclesiastes 11:1–2: *'Be generous: Invest in acts of charity. Charity yields high returns. Don't hoard your goods; spread them around. Be a blessing to others...'* Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

Journalist and cartoonist, Frank M Hubbard has some great one-liners: *'The safe way to double your money is to fold it over once and put it in your pocket.'* And *'Honesty pays, but it don't seem to pay enough to suit some people.'* And he plainly states: *'When a fellow says, "it ain't the money but the principle of the thing," it's the money.'*

Jesus, in his parables, talked most often about the Kingdom of God, about faith, salvation, and hell, but in nearly a half of all his parables he uses money and possessions as the illustration. Read Matthew 6:24.

In biblical teaching the tithe (one tenth of our income) is the starting point of giving. Jesus affirms tithing in Matthew 23:23. Read Malachi 3:10 – note that the storehouse is the temple, today that's the church. In *The Gift of Giving*, R. T. Kendall writes, *'If every professing Christian would tithe, every congregation would be free from financial worries and could begin truly to be 'the salt of the earth' (Matt 5:13). If every Christian would tithe the church would begin to make an impact on the world that could change it. The church instead is paralysed. Tithing Christians could make a big difference. But because most Christians do not tithe the church remains in a generally discouraged state.'*

We are challenged to give what we cannot afford not to give! In other words, dare we risk missing out on God's full blessing because we are not fully giving? God gives his all – Jesus had nothing left on the cross! The

widow (read Mark 12:41-44) gave everything. The tithe is the starting point, but we are judged by what we have left, not what we have given.

We are to seek first the Kingdom of God. That is to put God first. Martin Luther said, *'There are three conversions necessary: the conversion of the heart, the conversion of the mind, and the conversion of the purse.'* Read Proverbs 3:9.

We are to be responsible for ourselves, not be irresponsible with what God has given us. And we are invited to rejoice in and enjoy wealth that God has blessed us with. But we are much more challenged to seek God first, not allow money or possessions to master us, to be generous, sharing with others, and to put our possessions to 'work', not to hoard – read Matthew 25:14–30.

Our giving is to grow the Kingdom of God, for God's glory. Read 2 Corinthians 9:12. Thanks be to God for the generous giving of so many, or you, in this church. The Kingdom of God work that we do is made possible by 'your' generosity. We can run activities among the older members of our community, with families, children and young people, the can sustain worship, run Alpha, and maintain the facilities, and pay the staff team we employ! All this is possible because people in this church give – we have no outside funding from the wider church! THANK YOU and Praise God!

Generosity is more than money. We can be generous with our time, in hospitality, and in sharing our lives. Read Acts 2:42-47.

We give generously in this church, but there remain needs. In COGS, there is a need to improve our facilities – we need to update our kitchen facilities, which are woefully out of date and unfit for our needs. We took the difficult decision to reduce our giving to charities after the squeeze of COVID and the current financial crises but we aim to restore that giving and maybe more besides.

And the need is great across our world. Over 21,000 died in Turkey's awful earthquake, but 146 million people facing extreme hunger in Africa and yearly, 400,000 die of starvation on this continent. Tearfund Fund is a great organisation responding to these needs. Read 1 John 3:17. We may not have much, but we can give, and give generously. Read Deuteronomy 16:16-17. God honours those who seek to honour him and not giving is a Risk! Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-8. We cannot outgive God, Read, Proverbs 22:9 and Luke 6:38.



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: Second Sunday Before Lent (Sexagesima). Almighty God, you have created the heavens and the earth and made us in your own image: teach us to discern your hand in all your works and your likeness in all your children; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all things, 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 Feb. at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: Wed. 22nd Feb at 11am in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise: TBA
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays. COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.