

3rd October 2021

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 set out below.

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, be thou my true word
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord
Thou my great Father, and I thy true son
Thou in me dwelling and I with thee one

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

Read: John 15:18-16:4

God Beside Us - a summary of the talk given by Timothy James

Do you know this story?

"I got a free trip in an aeroplane

That's good

Not so good, the engines failed

That's bad

Not so bad, there was a parachute
under my seat

That's good

Not so good, the parachute didn't
open

That's bad

Not so bad, there was a haystack
below me

That's good

Not so good, there was a pitchfork in
the haystack

That's bad

Not so bad, I missed the pitchfork

That's good

Not so good, I missed the haystack."

So our passage runs like this: bad news, the world will hate you; good news, you will have help; bad news, they will act on their hatred, and you won't be able to say I didn't warn you.

What questions does this raise?

Who/what is "the world"?

Put in context with the rest of John's gospel, this term starts off being very close to what he means when he says "the Jews", i.e. the religious authorities who brought about Jesus'

execution and subsequently refused to accept his followers (hence the comment about putting them out of the synagogues (16:2), which was what was actually happening when John was writing his gospel).

But more broadly it is consistent with the picture of reality present throughout John's writing on which I preached in May: "The one who comes from above is over all; the one who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks about earthly things" (Jn. 3:31). Two tiers of reality exist, the earthly and the heavenly. Jesus, the "man from above", is the ruler of one; the "ruler of this world" (Jn. 14:30) dominates the other. Between these kingdoms there can be no peace.

Why do "they" hate Jesus and his Father, and his followers?

I John 3: 13 "Do not be astonished, brothers and sisters, that the world hates you."

Why are we hated? Because we don't belong; we don't conform; we don't think and act in the same way as they do; we are a challenge to their way of life. And we insist on pointing at Jesus, making it hard to ignore his challenge.

Vv. 22-25 go some way to explain this. They say that Jesus' coming made the sinfulness of the world

inescapable. The inevitable response is hatred of the person whose presence and actions have made it impossible to avoid the fact that their own opinions, values and actions are being judged.

How does this work out in practice? It may be easy to think in terms of persecution of Christians in countries like Afghanistan, China, Nigeria and Iran; but it applies too in this country, although our very legal system establishes a form of Christianity as the state religion.

Consider: what happens when a Christian expresses an opinion which is not “mainstream”? What is your experience? Isn't it a lot easier when you keep your faith private, don't express distinctively Christian opinions and simply try to be kind? Nobody objects to that, but you mustn't be “political”, or controversial in any way. If you do, you are strongly encouraged not to force your beliefs on others: don't be “judgmental”!

So what is the good news?

The good news is in vv. 26-27. We have help.

In fact, this is why we need the Holy Spirit: without his help, we would be on our own in a world which hates us – not indifferent, not in civil disagreement but actively hating, and acting on that hatred.

This explains the mention of “stumbling”. If we experienced this

situation without warning and understanding of its rationale, we might fall flat on our faces. When John's fellow-believers were put out of the synagogue, treated with contempt and excluded from their community, even killed, it would have been easy to think “why are they doing this? are we wrong?”. They needed to know that this was the natural, the inevitable result of the fundamental hostility between Jesus' kingdom and the world. It's not an error, it's the way things have to be.

The Helper, however, came at Pentecost and has been with Jesus' followers ever since. The Holy Spirit is called the paracletes, which means “the one who is called alongside”. He is the Spirit of Truth. And the consequence of his coming (v.27) is to enable us to do what we are here to do, to testify.

Why is this passage in John's account of Jesus' farewell address?

Remember that this is what John's book is all about: testimony to Jesus, to who he is and what he came to do. The entire gospel consists of a collection of testimonies from witnesses and other forms of evidence, and its objective is that we should believe (20: 30-31) and in our turn testify. The Helper testifies, so we can testify.

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, for neighbours, for family and friends.
- Pray for the Church.

Collect: 18th after Trinity: *Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us your gift of faith that, forsaking what lies behind and reaching out to that which is before, we may run the way of your commandments and win the crown of everlasting joy; 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: 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 for ever. **Amen.**

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, COGS, 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, 9.30am & 7pm. And we are now live streaming the 9.30 service. This Paper Service will continue for the moment but will now become available the week after the service, rather than the week before.

This week we are still collecting for Tearfund as our Harvest Collection. Cash, cheques, and online donations can be made.

Further information is on our website or by ringing our vicar, Howard, on 01420 563344.

