

5th December 2021

The paper-version Service



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love



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:

All my days I will sing this song of gladness,
give my praise to the Fountain of delights;
for in my helplessness you heard my cry,
and waves of mercy poured down on my life.

I will trust in the cross of my Redeemer,
I will sing of the blood that never fails,
of sins forgiven, of conscience cleansed,
of death defeated and life without end.

Beautiful Saviour, wonderful Counsellor,
clothed in majesty, Lord of history,
you're the way, the truth, the life.
Star of the morning, glorious in holiness,

you're the Risen One, Heaven's champion,
and you reign, you reign over all!

I long to be where the praise is never-ending,
yearn to dwell where the glory never fades,
where countless worshippers will share one song,
and cries of 'worthy' will honour the Lamb!

Beautiful Saviour, wonderful Counsellor,
clothed in majesty, Lord of history,
you're the way, the truth, the life.
Star of the morning, glorious in holiness,
you're the Risen One, Heaven's champion,
and you reign, you reign over all!

Read: John 21:1-25

God Approves Us - a summary of the talk given by Rev. Howard Wright.

Why this reading at Christmas, at Advent? Well, Advent is about waiting for the coming of God and a preparation for the presence of the King, and here as we finish our John series we have: the disciples waiting, and Jesus the resurrected King who arrives among them.

Simon-Peter has been made to wait. He encountered the resurrected Jesus but there's been a wait and now Peter goes fishing. We don't know why Peter goes fishing. He's been called from fishing, but he returns to it. He maybe thinks his time with Jesus is done – such was his massive failure that he returns to what he knows he can do. Except that it doesn't go well. It turns out his strength is nothing without the blessing of God. And so, they catch nothing.

And then Jesus Arrives. It's early in the morning (again) and a person calls from the shore. 'Friends, haven't you any fish?' It's just what you need if you're a fisherman with no catch, to have someone rub it in that you've failed. Jesus brings his wisdom, his strength, and power. The disciples didn't check with Jesus about their activity they trusted their own strength, but Jesus, from whom all our strengths come still

meets them and the result is a superabundance of fish.

Even in our areas of giftedness and skill, the true master craftsman, wants us to allow him to be involved.

Now the disciples recognise Jesus, and he invites them to breakfast, he doesn't need their fish – he's already cooking, but he asks for some of theirs, nevertheless. The invitation of Jesus is to relationship, to a meal. The invitation is the same as to the lukewarm Laodiceans: 'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.' (Revelation 3:20) – believe and become children of God, brothers, and sisters with Jesus

But Jesus also brings challenge, perhaps judgement, as well as forgiveness. He questions Simon Peter, 'Do you love me more than 'these'? Perhaps the 'these' is deliberately vague as we all confess and repent of the things that would get in the way of our relationship with Jesus. What are they for you?

For Peter, it's perhaps the friendship of the other disciples or the loads of fish – this could have

them set for life. This is another charcoal fire and the same question three times. An echo of his very public failure, a public reminder but also a public restoration. Peter is given the chance to admit his failure and declare his loyalty to Jesus. God reminds us of our failures to bring repentance and restoration. The devil reminds us of our failures to crush us with guilt and shame.

Jesus offers forgiveness three times with a renewed commission. Peter is appointed, to continue Jesus' work and be a good shepherd, growing Jesus' flock. 'Be like me', Jesus is saying, 'and make disciples.' And this commission is, in individual ways, the same commission to you and to me. In fact, the conversation about 'the disciple whom Jesus loves', which is almost certainly John, is essentially Jesus saying be like me yourself, not like me like him. How often are we tempted to compare ourselves to others when Jesus calls us to model ourselves on him?

This commission is to 'love'. It starts with a love for Jesus and overflows with a love for others. Otherwise, it's empty and literally pointless because it doesn't point at

Jesus! As Paul said to the Corinthians: 'If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.' (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

So through this series and through this passage what has John been saying: 'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. ...to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...' (John 1:12 & 14).

Will we receive, make room, believe, and walk forwards with Jesus?

The 'many other things' (John 21:25) that Jesus has done, includes his work in you and through you today – let's continue the story.

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: Second Sunday of Advent: Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. **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, 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 are live streaming the 9.30 service. This Paper Service will continue for the moment and is available the week after the service.

The 'Mission of the Month' is Christians Against Poverty (CAP).

Christmas Services at The Church of the Good Shepherd

Sun. 19th December: Carols by Candlelight at 5 & 7pm
(the 7pm Carol Service will be live-streamed).

Christmas Eve: Crib Service at 4pm and Midnight Service at 11.30pm.

Christmas Day: Christmas Celebration at 9.30am (this service will be live-streamed).

