

8th May, 2022

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:

Bless the Lord oh my soul
Oh my soul
Worship His Holy name
Sing like never before
Oh my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name

The sun comes up
It's a new day dawning
It's time to sing Your song again
Whatever may pass
And whatever lies before me
Let me be singing
When the evening comes

Bless the Lord oh my soul ...

You're rich in love
And You're slow to anger
Your name is great
And Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness
I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons
For my heart to find

Bless the Lord oh my soul
Oh my soul
Worship His Holy name
Sing like never before
Oh my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name
Bless You Lord

And on that day
When my strength is failing
The end draws near
And my time has come
Still my soul will
Sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years
And then forevermore
Forevermore

Bless the Lord oh my soul
Oh my soul
Worship His Holy name
Sing like never before
Oh my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10 and Matthew 5:1-12

The sermon given by Rev Howard Wright: A Model Church.

We are looking through the New Testament letter of 1 Thessalonians. You can read the background in Acts 17, and we learn in the letter itself that it is written by Paul, Silas, and Timothy, in response to visit by Timothy.

The Thessalonians are called: Brothers and sisters and told that they are loved and chosen by God. What a great place to be in. Do you know yourself a member of God's family? Do know you are loved and chosen by God? It's a fundamental human desire to belong. It's why clubs and gangs form. But we're invited into the greatest family ever.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy, claim that they know the Thessalonians are family and both loved and chosen because of what they seen. The evidence they have is, firstly the way the Gospel was received, and, secondly, the lifestyle the Thessalonians now live.

So, firstly the Gospel was received with power (read again verse 4 & 5 and Ephesians 1:11-14). The Bible talks a lot about power. The extraordinary power of God to create and to rescue us, and the powerlessness of ourselves. It is by his power that God rescues us, and raises Jesus, and this same power is available to us today. The Holy Spirit is spoken of as the power of God embodied among us – and Jesus tells us in John 16 that it is the Holy Spirit that convicts us.

Do we know this 'deep conviction' and this power at work in us? Jesus tells us we simply need to ask (Read Luke 11:11-13). This power, Holy Spirit and conviction produces a transformed life, and this is the second evidence that the Thessalonians and we belong to God.

The Thessalonians turned from idols to follow a true and living God. Their focus was not with the rest of their society and culture. Thessalonica had a lot to offer in luxury, material living and sexual licence, but the Christians choose to follow their new Lord and Saviour, a true and living God – not some god made in our image, but one who is worthy of the title God and who makes us in his.

There are still idols today. An idol in Christian understanding is anything that would take the place of that which God deserves – that is, our devotion. What are we devoted to? A way of answering this is to ask, what do we give our time, energy, and money to, and are these things part of our service to God, as his good gifts, or for us?

We are encouraged like the Thessalonians to turn to the true and living God, the one who can truly satisfy. Taste and see that the Lord is good – no idols, stuff, money, position, or prestige will ever fully satisfy or last – God is good and eternal.

In their new lifestyle the Thessalonian Christians were imitators of their mentors and of Jesus, becoming a model and inspiration to others (Read verses 6 & 7). This is taking on the family likeness. Living as Jesus would live – what does that look like? There is guidance in the Bible, read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

We cannot do this on our own, and the good news we don't have to. We are given each other, our family to help us, and we are given the Holy Spirit to empower us.

This living differently resulted in suffering. Paul and Silas had been threatened and hounded out of Thessalonica by those jealous of the success of the new 'religion'. The new converts unwillingness to join in with what they now recognised as inappropriate and damaging behaviour and attitudes, would have riled former family, friends, and employers. Life was difficult but, by the grace of God and power of the Holy Spirit, there was an unquenchable joy. (Read James 1:2-3).

Can we know joy even in suffering? My limited experience says 'yes!' God is bigger and better than anything we might face – he promises to walk with us through it.

Much of the inspiration for this different lifestyle and for persevering in the Christian faith was there hope in the return of Jesus.

There was certainty of a rescue from the deserved wrath. The wrath of God and mercy of God are juxtaposed in the Bible and seen as together making his goodness. Goodness is not weak – in that it allows us to get away with anything. Any even average parent knows that there needs to be rewards and consequences for behaviour.

That God is against every form of evil, is on the one hand reassuring, and on the other terrifying. Broken things have a cost to be fixed. And if we can't or aren't prepared to pay that cost – it won't be fixed. But Jesus pays the cost for us! However, we must 'sign-up' for this! And the reward for choosing the God who chooses us is life now and forever!

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: Fourth Sunday of Easter:

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life: raise us, who trust in him, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, that we may seek those things which are above, where he 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, 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 and Bowls: Wed. 18th May at 2pm, Church Hall.
- Service of Thanksgiving & Remembering on Sunday 22nd May at 3pm. A service for those who have been bereaved; offered in the hope that it will be a support and give time to reflect and honour the memory of loved ones.
- Coffee & Questions: 25th May at 11am, Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise for Harvest, Sunday, 2nd October, 3pm – 4.30pm
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays. COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.