

# 15<sup>th</sup> 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:**

O perfect love, O perfect sacrifice,  
Fountain of life poured out for me.  
What heights and depths of  
heaven's mercy,  
The faithfulness that I believe.

And to whom shall I run?  
And in whom shall I hide?  
Only You hold the truth I desire.  
O perfect love, my prayer shall ever  
be, to be found in Jesus.

O perfect love, O perfect mystery,  
You were condemned, but I go free.  
What truth to know that I can rest  
upon:  
Your perfect love has covered me.  
And what can this heart know?

And what can this heart tell?  
But of grace that has rescued me.  
O perfect love, My prayer shall ever  
be, to be found in Jesus.

O perfect love, forever I shall sing  
Of heaven's gates flung wide for  
me.  
Where fear of death and tears of  
hopelessness  
Are swallowed up in victory.  
And what praise shall be sung  
Still to the Holy One;  
To the Saviour, Redeemer and King.  
O perfect love, my song will ever  
be: 'I am found in Jesus.'

## **Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-6 and Matthew 5:13-20**

**The sermon given by Rev Jonathan Rooke: God Pleasers.**

### **Gift**

Paul's great gift is his encounter with God. He was given his friendship with Jesus and walked daily with Jesus, and shared all of his life with Jesus. This is what Paul really values and what makes his life meaningful. We too are invited to have a relationship and friendship with Jesus. To walk with him is at the heart of our faith. That is his gift to us.

Paul is desperate to share the story of his gift of friendship with Jesus and encourage the new Christians in Thessalonica to continue their journey and to keep walking forward, step by step, and enjoy the deep joy of a Christian faith.

Paul is trying so hard in our passage to reassure the Thessalonians that he speaks truth with authority and tells only what God has told him to say.

He tells them he is like a steward of the Good News story that Jesus has risen and is alive. He must tell this story. He has been entrusted by God with this knowledge and joy and he has the privilege and responsibility of sharing it.

We too have the same gift. We too know we are in the presence of something bigger and deeper than ourselves, that is reverence. And we know that we too are meant to share the story. How are we to tell of the story of the love of God?

### **Motives**

Paul is really keen here to tell the Thessalonians that he is genuine. He is the real thing. There is no trickery or deception. There is no intention to induce conversion or conceal the cost of being a follower of the Way of Jesus, or to offer fraudulent blessings. Paul says his motives are pure. There is no ambition, or pride, or greed, or wanting popularity. He does not have unhealthy attachments to these sorts of things.

Paul reassures them that he is telling them Jesus' story because he really loves God and he experiences God's love for himself each day; in good days as well as days when he has had to suffer. He is the real thing. Paul is saying I am God centred. You can listen to me with confidence.

He is telling the story because it just comes out of him. I always like the image of Christians as people into whom God pours his water of life and it just

overflows so that God's love is made available to others, not because of any plans Christians make, but because they have just received love, noticed it, thanked God, praised him for it and it just fills them up and affects those around them -serves them, if you like.

### **Knowing for ourselves**

Paul says that he is talking to them about something he knows for himself. When we know God for ourselves, we can tell his story from the centre of ourselves with conviction.

Walking the Christian Way means walking with God, talking with Jesus, spending time eating with him, listening to him, asking questions, getting cross with him sometimes, being humbled sometimes. It means listening to him, noticing him, letting him into different parts of our lives, being honest with him. It means letting some things go so that we can make space for him. It means being with him so that we can become the people we were meant to be. It is a growth from the inside out. I think this patient, continuous being with God, setting some things aside in order to make room for God, is at the heart of our faith.

In COGS our mission statement refers to growing deeper in God's Love. God's love is something we receive. We can't force it or make it happen when it suits us. We open ourselves to it. Wait patiently. Time spent seeking God to know Him for ourselves bears fruit. It is how mission begins.

The Christian faith is called the Way for a reason. It is a Way that we walk, so we are in constant motion. We don't arrive with God. I think we are constantly welcomed forward, to learn new things, an ever deeper understanding and knowledge of God. It is a walking forward, a constant letting go and opening our hands to receive more.

Paul is genuine. All we have to tell others is about who God is. The more we are with God, the more we will have to tell – with words and by who we are in God. This pleases God.

**Pray:** God, please, open the doors of our heart, open the walls of our mind, open the windows of our soul so that you may pour your love into us and we can tell the story of your love with genuine hearts.

**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:**



*Risen Christ, your wounds declare your love for the world and the wonder of your risen life: give us compassion and courage to risk ourselves for those we serve, to the glory of God the Father. 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. 18<sup>th</sup> May at 2pm, Church Hall.
- Service of Thanksgiving & Remembering on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> 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: 25<sup>th</sup> May at 11am, Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise for Harvest, Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 3pm – 4.30pm
- COGS Tots: 2<sup>nd</sup> Mondays. COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.