

# 18<sup>th</sup> June, 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:**

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;  
to his feet your tribute bring.  
Ransomed, healed, restored,  
forgiven,  
evermore his praises sing.  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
Praise the everlasting King!

Praise him for his grace and favour  
to his people in distress.  
Praise him, still the same as ever,  
slow to chide, and swift to bless.  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
Glorious in his faithfulness!



The Good  
Shepherd  
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

Fatherlike he tends and spares us;  
well our feeble frame he knows.  
In his hand he gently bears us,  
rescues us from all our foes.  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
Widely yet his mercy flows!

Angels, help us to adore him;  
you behold him face to face.  
Sun and moon, bow down before  
him,  
dwellers all in time and space.  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
Praise with us the God of grace!.

## **The Sermon by Rev. Howard Wright. The King's feast (Father's Day).**

### **Isaiah 58:6-12. Matt 6:16-18.**

Our Sermon on the Mount Series and Father's Day are not necessarily an easy fit!

However, Jesus' sermon calls for people of integrity, God-seekers, God-pleasers, and surely this is the kind of person, including father, that we and the world needs, and needs us to be.

Jesus challenges us to match our inner life and the projected image. In an image driven world, it's too easy to present as something we are not inside – that would be hypocrisy. But God seeks and our families, communities, and world, needs people who are honest. We need those will lead us to God, not the pursuit of prestige and power, through pretence, but those who are humble and whole.

Our section in the sermon begins in 6:1. Jesus has confronted hypocrisy and gives three illustrations giving, prayer, and, in today's passage, fasting.

We sadly may have heard people complain that 'the church is full of hypocrites.' Meaning that we are those who demand standards from others that we don't ourselves achieve – we don't practice what we preach. Even God complains about the 'Church', see Malachi 1:6-9, those whose worship is for show.

The word 'hypocrite' was not a challenge or insult in Jesus' time, it simply referred to actors who used masks to hide their true identity, enabling them to be another character.

The challenge of Jesus, is summarised in the title of a Bill Hybel's book, '*Who You Are When No One's Looking.*' What kind of man, father, husband, - for that case, woman, mother, wife – employee, neighbour, citizen, are we when no one else is looking. The world needs men, and women of integrity. Our children, our community, need fathers and mothers of integrity – those who will live by God's standards – and be people of love!

The Pharisees lived by God's standards, in public, but failed to be people of love – they were proud, judgemental, merciless, and pitiless. They demanded standards of others that they couldn't keep themselves.

As one woman remarked when invited to try church, 'Why would I go there, I feel bad enough about myself already.' The church should be a place of safety and refuge, a place where all are loved and can find redemption and healing. Hypocrites seek to gain by their façade. They look for prestige, power, or money. They are self-seeking, not God seeking.

And I can be like this too!!!! I also need to find redemption and healing – and am so grateful for what I find here in our church community.

God is our example – the perfect father – and Jesus, the perfect human example.

Fasting is going without food, to spend time in with God in prayer and his Word. Christian author Richard Foster, “Fasting is the voluntary denial of (an otherwise) a normal function for the sake of intense spiritual activity.” So, it can also be time away from our phones, the internet, the TV, anything which we lean on – to help us lean on God.

It is to deny ourselves.

In an age when we have so much and we can have it all now, it teaches us to wait – to delay gratification of our appetites – and seek God’s help.

Richard Foster again, says that our stomachs are like a spoiled child, and spoiled children do not need indulgence, they need discipline. He writes, “fasting reveals the things that control us. This is a wonderful benefit to the true disciple who longs to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. We cover up what is inside us with food and other good things, but in fasting these things surface.”

Pride, anger, selfishness, and so on, are all revealed.

In the Old Testament just one day was set for fasting – the Day of Atonement – but people fasted voluntarily for other reasons. So what reasons?

1. To re-centre on God.

Jesus fasted, forty days in the wilderness in preparation for his ministry. We may need to take time to pray for guidance and help going forwards. We need fathers, and others, who will humbly be centred on God and his Kingdom – willing to forgo other ambitions for the sake of the Gospel, for their children and all children.

2. To avoid dependence on passions

Learning to deny ourselves – to take up our cross. Not a slave to our feelings, and wants. Do we have things that we obsess about, or emotions that master us – bring them to God, and may be, think about fasting. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. We need fathers, and others, who will humbly exercise self-control, not be self-obsessed and self-seeking but God-seeking examples.

Be a person, a father of integrity – whole, not play-acting – but performing for the audience of one, for God our Father. Take fasting seriously from those things which lead you astray. Read Matthew 5:27-30. 27

Pursue the rewards of God. Our passage concluded: ‘your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.’ Read Philippians 3:13-14. We all fail and some of us feel the weight of this failure heavily this morning. Come in repentance – receive the forgiveness of Jesus won on the cross. Ask for help, and receive prayer. And walk forwards, being the man, father, woman, mother, child, neighbour, citizen, that God has called you to be.

**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 after Trinity:** Lord, you have taught us that all our doings without love are nothing worth: send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love, the true bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whoever lives is counted dead before you. Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake, 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 forever. 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. 21<sup>st</sup> June at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: 28<sup>th</sup> June at 11am in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise TBA.
- COGS Tots: 2<sup>nd</sup> Mondays.
- COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.