

# 20th February, 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.



*The Good  
Shepherd*  
Four Marks

*Responding to God's Love*

**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:**

Guide me O Thou great Jehovah,  
Pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,  
Hold me with Thy powerful hand;  
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,  
Feed me now and evermore,  
Feed me now and evermore.

When I tread the verge of Jordan  
Bid my anxious fears subside;  
Death of death, and hell's  
destruction,  
Land me safe on Canaan's side;  
Songs of praises, songs of praises,  
I will ever give to Thee,  
I will ever give to Thee.

Open now the crystal fountain  
Whence the healing stream doth  
flow;  
Let the fiery, cloudy pillar  
Lead me all my journey through;  
Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,  
Be Thou still my strength and shield,  
Be Thou still my strength and shield

**Read Joshua 3: 1-17, Luke 7:1-10**

## **The sermon given by Howard Wright: Enter the Promised Land.**

In our age of high anxiety, we have very good news: this is our faith. A certain hope in, and proof of, a loving dependable God who calls us to himself, to where we belong – to home.

Last week we learnt about Joshua, who after the great leader, Moses, now had responsibility for leading the people of Israel into the Promised Land. We saw how Joshua had faith and was able to be strong and courageous as he trusted God, focusing upon his word and the many examples of his faithfulness. Today, Joshua's faith is tested, and he is bold and courageous – and there is much we can learn about stepping forwards as individuals and a church.

### **1. Keep fixed on Jesus:**

Joshua tells the people, that they have not gone this way before, so they need to keep their eyes on the Ark, the presence of God among his people.

There are always new things to face and what lay ahead for them were fortified cities, well-equipped armies, giants, and chariots. They had been previously told to take the land but had refused, and so, forty years later they are treading the same paths again and again – now they have another opportunity to do the new thing!

God is not calling us to go in circles, whether in our own lives, with the same fears and failures or as a church – he wants to renew us.

We must keep our eyes fixed on the presence of God (see Hebrews 12:1). He goes first. He leads and we are to follow. There are many other things to do, but does God come first – has he come first today? See Joshua 1: 7-9 and 24:15.

Wherever you walk this week can be further into the Promised Land, as we walk with the presence of God. But we'll need to fix on Jesus – God with us. We'll need to pray, read the Bible, and join in worship with others – and these will need to be priorities, or we'll lose our way, and face being left behind, being drowned, or defeated.

We may face a flood, a giant, but God has got this – we will need to step forwards into the grace of God. We may face temptations, fears, anxieties, rejections, or just unknowns but take time in the presence of God and move with him. The people in the wilderness had learnt to move when God moved,

not to be left behind. God goes ahead – you’ve never been to tomorrow, but God is already there!

## 2. Consecrate yourselves.

Joshua tells the people to sanctify themselves, to be made clean and holy; set apart for God’s work. There was an urgency, the river in flood, but getting right with God was more important.

We need to get our priorities sorted and step away from sin. We may need to seek forgiveness for grudges, bitterness, unforgiveness, a destructive habit, greed, selfishness, fear, or other things about which God is challenging us. Read 2 Cor. 7:1 and notice Hebrews 12:1-2.

The people are told to keep their distance from the holiness of God. God is not to be trifled with. He loves us but he is Holy and Just, there is a ‘terrible’ part to God’s nature. See Hebrews 10:26-31.

Caleb and Joshua are the only two left out of all the adults who left Egypt to walk into the Promised Land. All the others perished in the desert – their fear and lack of faith took them. We surely want to be found with Joshua and Caleb. Then look to Jesus. Because of Jesus we have a hope, an access, we can come with confidence. Read Hebrews 6: 19-20 and Romans 8:1.

## 3. Step in and step over.

The miracle occurs once they step in. The river is in flood and according to some estimates was up to two miles wide! (Today most of the water is drawn off for drinking water and irrigation!) Can we step into the water in obedience and faith (and downright ridiculous foolishness), trusting God to act? Tom Wright says that ‘Christianity is like riding a bicycle, unless you go forward, you’ll fall off.’ We need to be growing deeper with God and larger in Mission, as individuals and a church.

The priests were all in. See 1 Timothy 1:7 and Isaiah 43:2. God does the impossible, remember the angel to Mary? It’s not by our schemes or ingenuity, though God might use us. We can’t solve it, but God can. Hudson Taylor said, “I used to ask God to help me. Then I asked if I might help him. I ended up asking him to do his work through me.”

## 4. Testify:

There were twelve stone taken from the riverbed and stacked as a testimony to the crossing. What testimony do we want to make today and what memorial do we want to leave behind to the faithfulness of God in our lives?

**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 Before Lent (Sexagesima):** *Almighty God, you have created the heavens and the earth and made us in your own image: teach us to discern your hand in all your works and your likeness in all your children; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all things, 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 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.

- Coffee & Questions: 23rd February and 23<sup>rd</sup> March at 11am, Church Hall.
- Tea and Chat: 16<sup>th</sup> March at 2pm, Church Hall.
- COGS Tots: 8<sup>th</sup> March.
- Messy Church: 13<sup>th</sup> March.
- Prayer Meeting in Church, 7.30pm on 23<sup>rd</sup> February