

# 22<sup>nd</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:**

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch; like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed!

The Lord hath promised good to me,  
His word my hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be  
As long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we first begun.

**Read 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 and Matthew 5:21-26**

## **The sermon given by Andrew Walters: Family -- sharing lives.**

This letter was written in the early 50s AD while Paul was on his second journey; he had been to Phillipi before and would later go on to Berea. Paul is writing this letter to the early followers in Thessaloniki, which was the capital city of the Roman province of Macedonia, now in modern day Greece.

Before he followed Christ, Paul, who at that time went by the name Saul, was a big time persecutor of the early Christians, as we can read in Acts 9. Then, Paul met with Jesus - a meeting that completely transformed him and his mission in his life from Pharisee to living and breathing the gospel.

Whilst studying this passage, I am reminded of my first encounter with the Holy Spirit. I worked with a couple of guys from North Macedonia when I was living in Hamburg, during my Auf Wiedersehen Pet days. They were fleeing the troubles of the Yugoslav Wars. Hamburg had more refugees living in camps around the outskirts of the city and one was near where I lived. Barges filled with containers were moored on the river Elbe and there were more refugees in Hamburg than what the whole of the UK had at that point. I think Germany was doing, as a collective, something similar to Paul after the meeting with Jesus. That is as a nation, and indeed people I met and made friends with were reflecting on the past and how the past would affect the future.

I remember, after a Richtfest (which is a party put on by the house owners for the workers after the timber work on the roof was completed) myself and another met with Manfred, a friend, for yet more beer- quite enough by then. I decided to climb the crane on the building site next to Mano's bike shop. I scaled the fence, and then up to the top. Not happy there, I went out along the walkway and to the end of the beam to bounce it up and down. Really not a good plan. But I met with something and I felt a presence of something greater, but I really couldn't understand what was going on. I went back over the fence and told the others. I got called David Icke for weeks, and I just put it down to the beer.

Looking at this passage and remembering my Macedonian friends and the crane, I too reflect on my past and when I was not behaving at my best before I had my second encounter with the Holy Spirit. I had my own road to Damascus moment, and it changed my life.

As we can read in this passage, Paul's purpose is now all about the gospel and bringing it to the gentiles and to us. He has mentioned the Gospel four times in chapter two by the time we get to verse twelve. God's good news is absolutely key to Paul's life, just like how it is the key to ours too. In seeking to understand who Jesus is and how he lived his life as an example of living in line with God's will, Paul brought the good news of God, the Gospels- the power of faith, hope, love and the power of the resurrection, to the new believers.

This message was for the Thessalonians but it is also for us too. It is not just what he said, but it is the way he lived and worked. This matched his message. He spoke it and lived it, and he mirrored his life on Jesus Christ. He humbled himself and he suffered. He talked the talk and walked the walk, and this is seen in this passage. He knew he was a child of God.

I helped out in Kid's Church recently and I have seen mums not only speaking of God but absolutely showing the good news. It is a really tough job, being a mum, and you work 24/7 but you are living out the gospel all the time. It is full of mundane moments and sleepless nights, but take heart and pull on him: he is pleased that you are living the gospel. Paul speaks of father's too, to encourage and comfort. In our world today, we quite rightly share these roles, and I cherish the times I had with my dad. Jesus calls on his father in prayer throughout his life. It is difficult to imagine Jesus as a child, but it is definitely easier to see him as a son. The passage that touches me most in relation to Jesus' relationship with God, his father, is Luke 22:41-42, where he was praying to God in the olive grove before he was betrayed.

"Then he went off from them about the distance of a stone's throw and knelt down and prayed. "Father," he said, "if you will, take this cup of suffering away from me. Not my will, however, but your will be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him."

When we seek to mirror Jesus and take on the family likeness, to follow him and to invite him into our lives- to ask for help to mother and father our friends, our church, our families, our old folk, people with illnesses, people who need help, people we struggle to love. When we struggle to love people like Jesus does, like in verse 43 of Luke 22, Jesus tells us he will send angels to strengthen us.

I heard a priest on the radio giving a thought for the day. He said that he tries to treat people as he meets them as though he had just met with Jesus. What he means is that all the people he meets, he holds them above himself. He makes himself humble and beneath them, no matter who. Young, old, rich or poor, and particularly the vulnerable or the homeless.

I think Paul's life in these verses, and indeed in all of his letters, was doing just that. The salt and the light, the good news of God- living and sharing the gospel. Paul was not working alone in this. He had his friends Timothy and Silas as well as the Holy Spirit. We too have a fantastic Church family, and I rely on quite a number of 'God mates' who help me.

### **Prayer**

Lord help us live a life that reflects you. Help us take encouragement from Paul's letters and life. Send us out in the power of your spirit. Amen.

**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:**



*God our redeemer, you have delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of your Son: grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life, so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, 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 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. 15<sup>th</sup> June at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee & Questions: 25<sup>th</sup> May, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 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.