



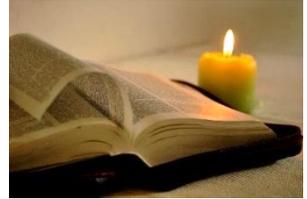
The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

25th April 2021

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 and everlasting Father, thank you for your amazing grace lavished upon us in Jesus and by your Holy Spirit. Send your Spirit to lead us in worship today. Forgive us for our failures, our sins of both action and inaction and help us to walk faithfully as your servants and children. That, like John the Baptist, we might bring glory to you, by pointing others to you, the King and Saviour. **Amen.**

Song:

Name above all names,
The Saviour for sinners slain.
You suffered for my sake
To bring me back home again.
When I was lost,
You poured Your life out for me.
Name above all names,
Jesus, I love You.

Giver of mercy,
The fountain of life for me.
My spirit is lifted
To soar on the eagle's wings.

What love is this
That fills my heart with treasure?
Name above all names,
Jesus, I love You.

High King eternal,
The one true and faithful God.
The beautiful Saviour,
Still reigning in power and love.
With all my heart
I'll worship You forever:
Name above all names,
Jesus, I love You.

Read: John 1:19-34.

God is not us. *A summary of the talk given by Howard Wright.*

This series we are looking together at John's Gospel. Last week we saw how we can move forwards with

confidence because we have a God who is both vast and near. He is big enough to cope with all changes and challenges, and he loves enough to come close and be involved.

This week we learn more about the God among us, through the words of John the Baptist – who is not the John who wrote the Gospel!

1. **People want a Messiah:**

The religious leaders come to John the Baptist and ask him, ‘are you the Messiah?’ The context is that for 400 years the people of God had waited for God to send a rescuer, a Messiah, a person to fix ‘it’ – whatever ‘it’ is. And the current ‘it’ was the Roman occupying force.

Most of us find ourselves at times wanting a rescuer, a fixer, a Messiah. So, this was the obvious question to John, the new hero on the block. He was odd, but there was something good, and bold about him and he was popular with the people. Surely, he could lead a rescue from their current problem.

So, John is asked, ‘are you the Messiah?’ but we are told, John, *‘did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, ‘I am not the Messiah.’*

Where might we look for our rescue. We might look to the Johns, the capable people of the world, possibly even ministers, but more likely scientists, doctors, financiers, perhaps our own bank balance, even politicians, or simply the entertainers and diversions of the modern age. This will surely fix-it, or if not, at least make it feel better.

Where do we look for our rescue? The psalmist writes, *‘I lift my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of Heaven and earth.’* (Psalm 121:1-2). Where are we looking? John was clear, he would not be providing the rescue.



2. **I am not the Messiah.**

Though many of us find ourselves wanting a rescuer, many of us are also tempted to attempt to be the rescuer – the messiah who fixes others or even ourselves.

John was clear to dissuade others from looking at him but also clear to himself that he wasn’t to attempt to be the hero himself – that was someone else’s job; and he was to do his job, not someone else’s.

Once John the Baptist realised that the Messiah was actually his cousin, I wonder how that felt. After all, his cousin was younger than him and that side of the family less significant – Joseph was a carpenter, whereas his dad had been a priest and an important one at that. John had all the

class, and now all the popularity, but he was classy and humble enough to realise it was Jesus and not him who was the Messiah – read verses 26-27.

It's been often said that the only person never to suffer the Messiah complex – the idea that we are needed – is the actual Messiah!

Some of us need, much love and encouragement, or a simple kick to get us up and moving, but for many others we risk taking ourselves far too seriously, and we need to notice that it isn't about us. We are not God's gift to the world, that would be Jesus. We have our limits, and we often push ourselves to them and maybe even beyond them. God is limitless, and we must trust his ways, leaving him to be the Messiah.

We are not needed by the world or God, but wonderfully, God wants us, and the world can be blessed through us, as it was by John the Baptist.

Notice how Jesus is. For his relationship with his Father and others came first – though there were many important things to do, he didn't rush or stay late at the office, he took rest and Sabbath seriously and allowed his soul to be restored. How else could he be so calm, that he could calm a storm; so peaceful that he didn't defend himself when accused, even at his trial; so trusting of his Father, that he gave his spirit over to him.

Jesus did not exert himself over others or force his fix on the supposed 'needy'. He acted with gentleness and humility, respecting others – he was full of truth and grace, (the duo we mentioned last week) as he lived a life of love.

3. **Who am I?**

So, if we are not the Messiah, who are we? John the Baptist's answer was, '*I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Make straight the way for the Lord."*'

We are to live in-line with Jesus, walking straight. This requires repentance, a constant turning again to Jesus, and this was the heart of John's message – repent for the Kingdom of God is near! And now the King and his Kingdom have come nearer – God is among us.

John testifies, that Jesus is the Messiah, he points to him – read verses 29-31.

John the Baptist's life and words, pointed to Jesus, he was sure who God and Messiah is and looked to this God for his own rescue. And he was sure about who he was in the scheme of things and willing to do his job, loving and serving this God and the people.

Pray – that we too might be sure and live a life full of truth and grace, a life of love.

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: 4th 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: God the Father, by whose love Christ was raised from the dead, open to us who believe the gates of everlasting life. God the Son, who in bursting the grave has won a glorious victory, give us joy as you share the Easter faith. God the Holy Spirit, whom the risen Lord breathed into his disciples, empower you and fill us with Christ's peace. And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

The Notices: We are now holding ticketed and socially distanced services in the building on Sundays at 9.30am. Further information on our website or by ringing our vicar, Howard.

If you know of others who would like to receive this, or you would rather not receive it; or if you find yourself isolated and not able to get neighbours, friends, or family to help, then ring Howard, 01420 563344.

