

# 27th 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:**

Great is the Lord and most worthy of  
praise

The city of our God, the holy place

The joy of the whole earth

Great is the Lord in whom we have  
the victory

He aids us against the enemy

We bow down on our knees

And Lord, we want to lift Your name  
on high

And Lord, we want to thank You

For the works You've done in our  
lives

And Lord, we trust in Your unfailing  
love

For You alone are God eternal

Throughout the earth and heaven  
above.

Great is the Lord and most worthy of  
praise

The city of our God, the holy place

The joy of the whole earth

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## **The sermon given by Rev. Jonathan Rooke: Conquering our Fears.**

**Read Joshua 5:13-6:7**

### **Learn from Joshua**

The Israelites had to get over the walls of Jericho otherwise they could not move forward. How was Joshua to overcome this obstacle? He knew that siege warfare against a well defended city was costly and very difficult with no guarantee of success.

How will he overcome this barrier?

### **Joshua submits**

Joshua looks up and he sees the commander of the army of the Lord. Joshua recognises he is in the presence of God and Joshua bows down. When God's messenger appeared, Joshua immediately submitted. The point here is that Joshua puts himself in the way of God. He allows himself to be in a place where God can meet him. Joshua then lets God take control of the problem.

### **Joshua Listens to God**

Just like Joshua, when Christians hit difficult problems, they call out to God and say, "Tell me what do I do Lord?" Joshua listens. Listening to God is what disciples of Jesus are called to do. What do Christians do. They listen. They receive from God. They choose to do what God leads them to do.

God's solution is not the recommended military solution. God's solution is to form a procession with armed men, the Ark, which was the symbol of God's holy presence, followed by priests with horns and then the people of Israel. They are to march around the city once each day for seven days. "Go forward," says God, and march around the city blowing the horns and shouting. It doesn't make military sense. But Joshua listens and does not argue.

Sometimes when we have walls to overcome, we try everything we know and we seem to get nowhere. Perhaps we can let go of our own resources and ideas and create some space to invite God to talk. It can be quite a painful time. We can be quite vulnerable at this time.

### **Joshua obeys**

A sensible way forward when we come to a wall is to bring the problem to God, listen, reflect on the possible courses of action and choose what seems better. We listen to what we think God is saying and then we obey. We might chat with a trusted friend to test out what we think we have heard. Sometimes

what we think we hear confirms our own ideas and sometimes it fills us with fear.

The important thing is that Joshua obeyed. He tried. He acted in faith. In faith, he did what he believed God wanted him to do

Rowan Williams describes faith in God as 'a dependable relationship'. Joshua has a relationship with God and he has found God to be dependable. God has keeps his word. We can depend on God. Faith, he says, is a conviction that we are not 'let go' of. We can be held even when we don't feel we can hold on. Our relationship with God is initiated and sustained by God's faithfulness, not ours and God's faithfulness is dependable. We are held by a God who does not let go and a Christ who does not run away. As a church, Rowan Williams says, we are to embody that same dependability in Four Marks. Joshua obeys and goes forwards.

### **Joshua trusts and waits**

Joshua trusts. Joshua's trust means he is prepared to wait for God. I wonder if, as he was walking around the walls each day, his faith wobbled a bit. We must have felt like that. It can be like this sometimes. If we just keep trusting God and working at this difficult relationship it will get better. But day after day you try and the other person we are reaching out to doesn't soften. We have to keep trusting and keep talking to God and keep obeying. For days perhaps, nothing seemed to change for Joshua. The first day, nothing. Marching and trumpets, but the walls still stood.

By the sixth day Joshua could be thinking, "Maybe God's got it wrong. This isn't working I'm just going round in circles here so I will fall back on my own resources."

But Joshua doesn't. He stays faithful and trusts God's promises and persists.

Joshua trusts and the story shows us that by placing God at the heart of the solution to the problem, allowing our actions to be directed by faith, God comes through and the walls come down.

When we come up against walls, we can let God be part of the plan and submit, listen, obey, trust and wait patiently.

Dear Lord, we bring you our walls. We bring you the walls of our neighbours in this church. We bring you the walls of our neighbours in the parish and those we love. Please guide us and help us to trust. 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, for neighbours, for family and friends.
- Pray for the Church.

**Collect: Sunday Next Before Lent (Quinquagesima):** *Almighty Father, whose Son was revealed in majesty before he suffered death upon the cross: give us grace to perceive his glory, that we may be strengthened to suffer with him and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory; 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, 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: 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.