

30th January, 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:

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder,
Consider all the worlds Thy Hands have made.
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God,
to Thee, How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God,
to Thee, How great Thou art, how great Thou art*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander,
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees.
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
and hear the brook and feel the gently breeze

Then sings my soul...

And when I think that God, His Son
not sparing, Sent Him to die, I scarce
can take it in That on the Cross, my
burden gladly bearing, He bled and
died to take away my sin

Then sings my soul...

When Christ shall come with shout of
acclamation, And take me home,
what joy shall fill my heart. Then shall
I bow with humble adoration, And
there proclaim, my God, how great
Thou art

Read Hebrews 12: 1-4, Luke 5: 1-8

The sermon given by Lorna Littlewood: Jesus Perfects Faith.

Who inspires you? Our passage this morning is preceded by an account of historical figures all through God's story who we can be inspired by. Have a read in Hebrews 11. We are called to follow their examples as we look to our own lives. The list given however, is not exclusive. Take a moment to think about who inspires you, perhaps from history, or even someone you know today who sets a great example of following Jesus.

Because we have so many examples of people who inspire us, we are then invited to use this inspiration to live our own lives the same way. We follow the example of others who have focussed on Jesus. We are given the imagery of a race, which generally means lots of people travelling in one direction, aiming for a finish line or a goal. But our passage makes it clear that our race is not always quite that simple. There are plenty of things that "hinder" and "sin that so easily entangles" which throw us off course, slows us down or stop us in our tracks completely.

In a running race, we might clear the tracks of tripping hazards and make sure that the path is clear. Similarly, we are encouraged to remove from our lives anything that's in the way, and anything that's likely to push us into the wrong direction.

So, what are those things for us? Some of these things will be choices we make and situations we have control over. Some of them will be circumstances we find ourselves in that we have very little control over. Some will be things that we can do something about, but which are really hard to do something about. Perhaps we're living with addiction, unhealthy mindsets, fear, illness, financial struggles, relationship issues, doubt, disappointment, unhealthy inputs and behaviours, apathy, feelings of overwhelm. The list could go on. Take a moment to reflect on the things in your life, which hinder and entangle you in your journey with Jesus.

It's important to acknowledge that these things exist, but it's also important not to leave them there if we can help it. There will be some things that we have no control, or very little control over, but there are others that we CAN do something about. You may like to take a moment to pray, repent and ask God

for his help in changing the behaviours, attitudes, and circumstances that you do have some control over.

There will be some things that we may not be able to just decide to throw off. There are some things in our lives that pull us in other directions and slow us down, and we can't run away from them. They are circumstances that we find ourselves in that we struggle with, and we might continue to struggle with. It's okay to recognise that this is really hard and that we struggle. Jesus experienced temptations that he threw off and ran from, but he also faced trials that he had to actually face.

“For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” So let us “Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (V2-3)

We all face things that we might not be able to run away from, but we're not alone. Jesus faced his own trials, and he will stand with us in ours. We have a God who steps into our world and into our lives and doesn't leave us to face these things alone. Sometimes it can help to share these struggles with other Christians whom we trust – they can stand with us in the trials and continually point us back in the right direction when we get knocked off course. But let's also ask God for his help. You might like to take a moment now to share with God the things that you're battling against, with which you need his help. We may have little control over our circumstances, but we can choose to trust that even in the continuous battles, God is in control.

Through the hindrances and entanglements, we must continually draw our focus back onto that finish line. Our focus is on Jesus, his love for us, his design for each of our lives, and his calling to follow him. His assurance is one of grace; that we will make mistakes and he will love us still, but his invitation is to run towards him, doing everything in our power to remove everything that gets in the way, so that our lives can be about and for him, until that day when we can reach our goal and enjoy eternity with him, in the fullness of the relationship he designed us for.

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: Fourth Sunday after Epiphany: God our creator, who in the beginning commanded the light to shine out of darkness: we pray that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ may dispel the darkness of ignorance and unbelief, shine into the hearts of all your people, and reveal the knowledge of your glory in the face of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **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, 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.

- Tea and Chat: 16th February at 2pm, Church Hall.
- Coffee & Questions: 23rd February at 11am, Church Hall.
- COGS Tots: 8th February.
- Messy Church: 13th February.