

5th September 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 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: John 13:1-21 – God Serves.

A summary of the talk given by Matt Senior.

We live in a world where power is prized. Many of us like to demonstrate our power or imagine how we could demonstrate our power if we had more. Contrast this with Jesus in verse 3 of our passage: "Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God." And then verse 4, "**So** he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist." Jesus knew that all things had been put under his power **so** he chooses to spend some of this last bit of time washing his disciples' feet.

This would have been shocking. Washing feet was a job reserved for the lowliest servant. This would be a bit like having your employer round for dinner, only to see them get up from the table and go to scrub the toilets. It's possibly as surprising for the disciples as any miracle they have seen Jesus perform. Jesus makes it very clear what his washing of feet was for in verses 12-17, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." It's an example to his disciples and an example to us. We should be ready and willing to serve, just as Jesus was ready and willing to serve.

Peter objected when Jesus came to wash his feet, saying that it should never happen. But there isn't a matter of choice here – Jesus responds to Peter, that "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." To walk with Jesus, we have to allow him to serve us.

So what are we to make of this story and of this example? A few things that stand out to me. If Jesus was willing to do the worst job then that should affect the way we see the worst jobs and how we respond to those who do them. Are we showing love and respect to them; the people who serve our meals, collect our rubbish, receive our customer complaints?

Following Jesus' example also means being willing to do the serving ourselves, maybe serving in ways that we'd rather not. It seems hard to read this passage and come away with the idea that any task is beneath us.

But I don't think this means we all have to start jostling to get to the least appealing jobs. The point isn't that we all have to do the 'lesser' tasks, but that we should all be *willing* to do them and be as grateful to the people who do them as to those who serve in leadership.

Also Jesus' example isn't about doing lesser tasks for the sake of it. When Jesus tells Peter he must have his feet washed, Peter then asks for his hands and head to be washed too. Jesus answers that they are already clean and don't need washing.

Jesus' example not just symbolic but practical. If something doesn't need doing, he didn't want to do it for show or ceremony. Peter wanted his hands and head cleaned too – wouldn't it have made for a better example? But it wasn't necessary, only his feet were dirty.

Are we a group of people ready to serve? There will be ways to serve in our homes, workplaces, community, relationships – and many of us will be serving in all sorts of ways, even if we need to adjust our attitude to some of the tasks that we'd rather not do.

Many of us will have served in the church in lots of ways and over many years. At COGS we've been reviewing the things we used to do. As a church we generally support all the things that used to happen before the pandemic. We're arriving at a point where we will be restarting many of these things and we will need servant-hearted people to help us put our events and services back on.

People to join our Kids Church team, people willing to serve tea and coffee after the services, people involved in Family ministry, in tea and chat, tea and bowls, coffee and communion, worship leading, our audio-visual team.

We are being called to serve gladly, but that's not all there is to this passage. Jesus wanted to show us that we should serve like him. His earthly life was all about service. Jesus serves us by dying on the cross, but that's not his only act of service. Jesus taught people, he fed hungry people, he helped to ensure the smooth running of a wedding, he comforted people, he prayed for people, he healed the sick.

It seems crazy that God should be serving us so much, that he should do so much for us. But it also makes sense. We know how much we need God. And we know the things we pray to God for and ask for his help with. In contrast, God doesn't need our service. But he invites us into service for our own good. In verse 17, he says that we will be blessed if we do these things.

So two questions to finish: How will we let God serve us today? And what will we do in response?

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: 14th after Trinity: *Almighty God, whose only Son has opened for us a new and living way into your presence: give us pure hearts and steadfast wills to worship you in spirit and in truth; 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, 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 we are now live streaming the 9.30 service. This Paper Service will continue for the moment but will now become available the week after the service, rather than the week before.

Further information is on our website or by ringing our vicar, Howard. 01420 563344.

