

Sunday 26 April 2020

The paper-version Service



For now, we cannot meet in the building – but the church is still open!

All of our services are on-line www.goodshepherdfourmarks.org.uk but we're producing this weekly sheet which captures our Sunday service for those who can't access the internet.

To Begin: Grab a Bible, if safe, perhaps light a candle, find a comfortable place 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 worship playlist on our website included below.

Opening Prayer: Father God, thank you that you meet with us where we are and invite us in. Thank you that you receive us with loving kindness. We offer ourselves to you, our failures and our joys. We receive your forgiveness and offer our thanks and worship. As we hear from your word, the Bible, help us to receive your peace and know your joy. Help us, full of your Holy Spirit, to declare your love to the world by our deeds and words to the glory of your name. Amen

Hymn. *This song is used in this week's worship playlist found on our website:*

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven, to his feet your tribute bring; ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, who like you his praise should sing? Alleluia, alleluia! Praise the everlasting King.

Father-like, he tends and spares us, All our hopes and fears he knows; in his hands he gently bears us, rescues us from all our foes: Alleluia, alleluia! Widely as his mercy flows.

Praise him for his grace and favour to our fathers in distress; praise him, still the same as ever, slow to blame and swift to bless; Alleluia, alleluia! Glorious in his faithfulness.

Angels, help us to adore him; you behold him face to face; sun and moon, bow down before him, praise him all in time and space. Alleluia, alleluia! Praise with us the God of grace.

Read: Ephesians 1:1-14.

Living in Praise to the God who chooses us (A summary of Howard's talk for 26 April):

We're starting a new series making our way through Ephesians, a letter that brings perspective in every age and circumstance about God, the world and ourselves.

Ephesians was written by Paul to the Christians in the city of Ephesus. Ephesus was vibrant, wealthy and rich in culture and entertainment, but much of this was a thinly veiled covering over the selfish pursuit of personal power, pleasure and comfort.

The city is on the Western Coast of modern-day Turkey and had the Temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

But despite the religious trappings the people behaved as though they were themselves gods. They lived as though they controlled their own destiny as self-made men and women.

Into this place comes the Good News of Jesus. This message cut through the trappings of pride, materialism and immorality, straight to the foundation of human need – the need for

encounter with God, and the forgiveness of God.

So, what can we learn?

The Bible begins with: *'In beginning, God.'* (Genesis 1:1). And in this letter, God just is. The concept of the Hebrew God was so different to both the ancient and contemporary ideas of the eternal, but God just is!

Though the religious foundation of Ephesus was majestic, Paul points to the far greater majesty of Jesus – the foundation of all creation. God *'...raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given...'* (Ephesians 1:20-21)

And what God is doing, is bringing all things back together under Jesus (see 1:9-10). Sin has broken the world and God wants to bring it back to that place of love, harmony, peace and joy, in company with him. And we're invited – chosen to be part of this great idea.

Though the Ephesians had much to boast of in their achievements. In chapter 2, Paul points out that there is no self-made man or

woman, we all depend on God, and are answerable to him.

But God reaches out to us! When we receive Christ and his forgiveness, we are his people. A people loved, a people of significance with security and a purpose. We are:

- Chosen ‘...before the creation of the world’ (1:4).
- ‘...holy and blameless...’ (1:4)
- ‘...adopted as his children...’ (1:5) and invited into an inheritance, both now and forever.
- Given the Holy Spirit. A guarantee, signed and sealed (1:13-14)

Nothing can separate us, (Romans 8: 35, 38-39) *‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ...For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any*

powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’

And all this, is to the praise of his glorious grace (:6) & Praise of his glory (:12).

To conclude:

Call out to God – invite him in and be part of the chosen. Turn to God, ‘repent’ is the Bible word, and receive his forgiveness.

The Ephesian Christians recognised they couldn’t fix their sin and failure themselves and reached out to God’s grace and became chosen children of God.

We cannot fix ourselves; we need God’s grace for our sin, failure and even Covid-19. So, call out to God, and receive the love, the grace, the peace and joy that he offers today.

(As we go through this series, I’d encourage you to regularly read through the whole letter, listening to God as you read.)

Prayers: *I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. (1 Timothy 2:1-2 NIV)*

Pray for the day ahead and its tasks

Pray for the nations

Pray for organisations

Pray for individuals, for neighbours, for family and friends

Pray for the Church

Pray for peace

A prayer for all those affected by coronavirus: Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy. Sustain and support the anxious, be with those who care for the sick, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may find comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. 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:

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

Our Staff, Ministry Leaders and PCC are all working from home and are keeping up to date using on-line technology. Do contact us if you have questions/concerns starting with Howard on 01420 563344.

