

# Sunday 3 May 2020

## The paper-version Service



The Good  
Shepherd  
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

***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](http://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 Service set out 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

### ***Song:***

How great the chasm that lay  
between us, how high the mountain  
I could not climb.

In desperation, I turned to heaven,  
and spoke Your name into the night.

Then through the darkness, your  
loving-kindness, tore through the  
shadows of my soul.

The work is finished, the end is  
written. Jesus Christ, my living hope.

Who could imagine so great a  
mercy? What heart could fathom  
such boundless grace?

The God of ages stepped down from  
glory, to wear my sin and bear my  
shame.

The cross has spoken, I am forgiven,  
the King of kings calls me His own.  
Beautiful Saviour, I'm Yours forever.  
Jesus Christ, my living hope.

*Hallelujah, praise the One who set  
me free. Hallelujah, death has lost its  
grip on me. You have broken every  
chain, there's salvation in Your name.  
Jesus Christ, my living hope.*

Then came the morning that sealed  
the promise, your buried body began  
to breathe.

Out of the silence, the Roaring Lion  
Declared the grave has no claim on  
me.

**Read:** Ephesians 1:1-14.

***Living in Knowledge of the God who chooses us*** (a summary of the talk given by Nigel Pink 3rd May):

This letter addressed to the church in Ephesus, is an encyclical letter to the churches of Asia - the region we now know as Turkey. It aimed to exalt the newly converted as to the nature of their salvation and new identity, and how to respond.

Ephesus was the third largest city in the Roman Empire, after Rome and Alexandria and a capital city of its region. The estimated population was 250,000. Ephesus sat on the western coast, bordering the Aegean Sea. But it was not trade as a seaport that drove its economy but visiting worshipers at the Temple to Artemis. As befitting its importance as a major pilgrimage site, the temple was largest structure of its time.

It was normal for pagans to favour one god or goddess over another, whether it be Pan, Apollo or Diana (Artemis). But devotees of one deity did not have to reject the others. Among 'Greeks', nobody questioned pantheism, that is until Christianity.

So early on his letter Paul challenges pantheism by asserting the Jesus is seated: *'far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.'* (:21)



...and that includes the name of Artemis. But dethroning Artemis was not just a matter of religious devotion; additionally, it meant that Ephesians would have their livelihood threatened. One silversmith, Demetrius, who fashioned and sold 'gods' (idols) made this accusation: *'...(Paul) says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshipped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty.'* (Acts 19:26-27)

Luke then describes an ensuing riot that engulfed the 'whole city'. We should note that asserting that Jesus is Lord is radical challenge to any society, whether first century Ephesus or today in Hampshire!

Yet Paul cannot and does not shirk from his message of truth, 'the gospel of salvation' (v13) for he would have Ephesians stand completely with Jesus. They cannot

be for both Jesus and Artemis; Jesus cannot be merely added to the pantheon; just another god to line up with the others – he is above all others.

Today's passage includes a three-point prayer of thanksgiving for this sure and certain knowledge of the inheritance. That all completely understand:

**The Hope:** I pray that the eyes of your heart\* may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people... (v18)

(\*Nb. This odd phrase *ophthalmous tes kardia* is an Hebraism, the heart being for Paul the seat of understanding - challenging the Greek concept of mind and reason - see Job 34:10; Job addresses his friends as 'men of understanding', literally 'men of heart'.)

**God's power:** *'...and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.'* (:19-20)

**Jesus' community:** *'...and (that) God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.'* (:22-23)

For Paul, he wanted to emphasise that these pagan believers were recipient of a radical transformation. They did not adopt or choose Jesus, Jesus chose them. They did not craft Jesus like a new statue; rather, Jesus fashions them from the inside out in his resurrection image.

And for us today, is Jesus a mere addition to the idols of our lives? Do we make Christianity a lifestyle choice? Or, perhaps we are 'sort of' Christian, placing our faith on a continuum between unbelief and belief? Or that we praise Jesus in church, but keep our faith discrete from other areas of our lives?

**Conclusion:** If we worship Jesus as Lord, we are necessarily changed people. And this is not notional; faith requires our whole hearts - we have to be all in! Being Christian is therefore not a pretence but a metamorphosis; moreover, we must not underestimate the power that causes this radical transformation. It is the very same power that not only conquers death but brings about the resurrection of Jesus as the first born of a totally new creation. Paul wants everyone to realise that each Christian is regenerated an individual miracle, and this so that we may live out their lives with some vague hopefulness, but in full and certain knowledge of the Hope, who is Jesus Christ.

**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



**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 it; or if you find yourself isolated and not able to get neighbours, friends or family to help, then ring Howard, 01420 563344.

Daily HOPE is a new initiative of the Church of England.



A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers