

Sunday 28 June 2020

The paper-version Service



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

All of our services are online www.goodshepherdfourmarks.org.uk but this weekly sheet captures our Sunday service for those without internet.

To Begin: Find 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 modern song from this Sunday's Service set out below.



Opening Prayer: God of light and love, thank you that you welcome us today. We confess that we are not worthy of your love, but we thank you that through Jesus, we can receive your grace. We thank you for the cross that buys us life and for the resurrection the proof of hope in you forever. Help us to live today as children of the light, sharing this light of your love with all we encounter. to the glory of your name. **Amen**

Song:

Search me know me, try me and see
Every worthless affection
Hidden in me
All I'm asking for
Is that You'd cleanse me, Lord

*Create in me a heart that's clean
Conquer the power of secret shame
Come wash away the guilty stain of
all my sin
Clothe me in robes of righteousness
Cover my nakedness with grace
All of my life before You now I humbly
bring*

Read: Ephesians 5:1-21

Living in God's light (a summary of the talk given by Peter Cox): Last week, Howard spoke to us that as

followers of Christ, we should be more and more taking on the family likeness, our hearts and priorities

moving in step with God, actively seeking His mind and will.

We pick up this theme within Paul's letter in chapter 5, verse 1.

There are three components to this verse which Paul then runs with throughout verses 1 – 21, so we are going to break down verse 1 and then see how it can be applied through the remaining verses.

Firstly, we are to follow God's example. This verse can seem unattainable. How on earth can we follow God's example?

It's so important to remember that God has not set an impossibly high bar, stepped back, and said "Reach this to get closer to me". Instead we are being led, we are not alone in this. We serve a God who through the life and death of Jesus Christ, reached out and took the greatest step to bring us to relationship with Him. We are to follow God's example and we have Jesus to help us, to pick us up when we fall, to walk beside us and who has gone ahead of us and paid the ultimate price so that we might be called dearly loved children.

The second part of verse one reminds us who we are – dearly loved children.

Children have been at the foreground of the current Covid-19 crisis as we rightly recognise them as being amongst the most vulnerable at this time. Tragically, we know that

this isn't the case for all children, but we've been witness to overwhelming acts of love, sacrifice and care for children.

We've seen families home-schooling, grandparents learning and adapting to new ways to connect with the children's families, teachers and schools producing amazing resources to help keep children afloat academically. This is just a microcosm of the scale of love that God has for us as His children; adopted with full acceptance and fully redeemed.

And lastly, we are told to 'walk in the way of love'.

Because we are not alone and we have Jesus, because we are His dearly loved children, we are able to walk in the way of love. An American theologian puts it really succinctly: 'God is not dictating commands here outside of the context of being led by Him, through Christ, and being loved by Him. So often, we look at verses out of context which makes God appear harsh or authoritarian, rigid or confining when God actually holds us in higher regard than we do ourselves.'. We must hold tightly to these two foundational truths, that we are led and we are loved.

Paul writes through verses 2 – 21 of a number of worldly practices which we are to avoid. These include: Sexual immorality and any kind of impurity (v3), greed (3), Obscenity,

foolish talk or coarse joking (v4) and, drunkenness and debauchery (v18) Paul could not be clearer that these practices are reflective of a heart opposed to God and who will not have any inheritance in God's kingdom. However, it is important to understand that this teaching is not saying that a single immoral thought, word or deed is enough to disqualify us from heaven, otherwise we are all doomed. We should remember that when we sin but repent in shame and humility, there is forgiveness.

Paul is equally clear though that our response to this love should be discernible in a change in our attitudes, behaviours and priorities that stand in contrast to the practices of the world. Out of this desire to live life as children of God, we are told that three things happen:

1 - Expose of evil and bringing into the light

Paul writes that his readers were 'once in darkness but now you are light in the Lord.' He encourages God's followers to live as children of light so that everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. This verse expresses a great encouragement to continue strong in our faith: for it may be that our walk as individuals and as a church will be seen by non-Christians and lead them to repent. What a wonderful encouragement to be part of the work of God's kingdom!

2 - Living life to the full

On the surface, the practices of the world may seem exciting, daring and new, while Christian morality appears dull and boring. But such worldly practises are based on self-gratification, attempts to supplant God on the thrones of our lives with ourselves. What we see in these practices are attempts to parody or mimic completeness and wholeness that can only be found in God.

God promises that when we give up these practices and embrace our identities as children of God, we gain a life that is full, complete and whole. There is a wonderful 'upside-down-ness' of the kingdom of God. The all-powerful God who wants to be in relationship with sin-ridden humanity.

We see this 'upside-down-ness' here as well. That when we give up and reject these practices we gain life to the full. As the missionary Jim Elliot wrote, he is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.

3 - Living as part of the fellowship of the church

The final encouragement as we purposefully strive to live as children of God is that we don't do so alone. As Paul writes here about singing and making music from our hearts, this isn't a solo performance – this is about singing together as a

community. We are called to walk with God together, encouraging and helping each other as we seek to imitate God.



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

Collect for 3rd after Trinity: Almighty God, you have broken the tyranny of sin and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts whereby we call you Father: give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service, that we and all creation may be brought to the glorious liberty of the children of God; 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: 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.

The Church will be open from Monday 29th June for those who would like to use the space for private prayer. Clear instructions will be displayed on how to make use of the church safely.

