

Sunday 2nd August 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: Father God thank you that you invite us into your family. Forgive us for times when we have brought dishonour to your name. Thank you for your mercy and forgiveness, help us to be transformed and increasingly live for you, reflecting your glory in the world by our love for you, each other and our neighbour. **Amen**

Song:

Water You turned into wine
Opened the eyes of the blind
There's no one like you
None like you

Into the darkness You shine
Out of the ashes we rise
There's No one like you
None like you

*Our God is greater
Our God is stronger
God You are higher than any other
Our God is Healer
Awesome in power
Our God, Our God*

And if Our God is for us, then who
could ever stop us?
And if our God is with us, then what
can stand against?

Read: Psalm 50.

Perspective (A summary of the talk given by Howard Wright). This Psalm begins dramatically. We are confronted with the vastness, majesty, and power of God.

Deuteronomy 4:39 says: God is not a vending-machine deity: *'Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other.'* Have we a big enough view of God?

Verse 4 and 5, move us to court scene, where heaven is gathered as the jury and the people of God gathered as the accused. This is something quite terrifying. Hebrews 10:31 tells us: *'It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'*

God is Love and he comes to us in Jesus, but he is also the Holy Judge. This seeming paradox is brought together in the cross. Here the immensity of his love and the awfulness of sin is seen in the agony and darkness.

In our Psalm, God says, there might be no problem with their religious rituals. They have turned up, but they have gone away smug and unchanged by the experience! They face two specific accusations:

Firstly, the worshippers think that they have done God a favour by turning up! Today, God might not speak about sacrifices of bulls, but perhaps in this way: Your songs are great, nice tunes, good words but I don't 'need' these – all music, including heaven's song, belongs to me – what I want is your hearts turned toward me; I want you to love with all your heart, soul, mind and strength!

We risk falling into this trap. 'I've been good, I've paid my dues to God, I pray, even read my Bible and attend church – God owes me. So why are we getting this pandemic, why am I suffering?'



It is babies that cry or scream for what they wanted and like infants, at times we demand of God, but he wants a relationship with us of mutual trust.

My children are now adults, we have relationships which are not about an individual's immediate needs which they demand with screams, but about love and care for each other. It is not all about 'you' or 'me' – it is, of course, all about Jesus, the King who demonstrates how to live selflessly for others – winning people by his kindness – even in his death.

Secondly the worshippers were accused of hypocrisy. Their words were empty. They turned up to God on holy days, but not on any other day. They were going through the motions, claiming the name of God, to be in his family – but not taking on the family likeness.

Jesus saved his harshest words for the hypocrites of his day. In Matthew 7, Jesus addresses those who use his name, even doing miraculous deeds but who fail to live in grace: *'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'* (:21-23)

So what are we to do? Verse 14 gives us the answer: *'Sacrifice thank-offerings to God, fulfil your vows to the Most High...'*

We are to live thankfully and honestly. As people who reflect the holiness and generous love of God.

Firstly, to be thankful to God is an antidote to our pride and arrogance that we have done it ourselves and somehow God owes us. It gives us perspective on God and ourselves and acknowledges our dependence on our Lord. Not so much, 'I have been a good person', but 'I have not but Christ has'!

Thankfulness comes from a recognition that God is and will be, that he is at work, even in the difficulties of life, even in Covid-19.

It gives us a hopeful & joyful confidence so that we can live with generosity toward others. Not to cling to our things, which is a temptation when our world is rocked, but to be open-handed sharing to others. This has been a hallmark of the church through the ages, and today. Whether through organisations like Foodbank,

Compassion and Tearfund or through acts of kindness, one neighbour to another.



Ephesians reminds us: '...speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.' (5:19-20)

Secondly, to fulfil our vows, is to live as we have promised, as the children of God, developing the family likeness, revealing God to the world. In other words, loving each other as Christ has loved us, and loving our neighbour as ourselves.

The key for me today is generosity, of spirit, words, and deeds, it is too easy to gripe about our political leaders and forget to pray for them, and in a crises of this sort to cling onto what we have and not share with those in need.

The final verses of the Psalm come as a warning and encouragement to us to live thankfully and honestly: *'Consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you to pieces, with no one to rescue you: those who sacrifice thank-offerings honour me, and to the blameless I will show my salvation.'*

Prayers: Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6)

- 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 8th after Trinity: Almighty Lord and everlasting God, we beseech you to direct, sanctify and govern both our hearts and bodies in the ways of your laws and the works of your commandments; that through your most mighty protection, both here and ever, we may be preserved in body and soul; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 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.

Church Services: This Sunday, 2nd, 9.30, we will hold a service in the church building. For those of us able to come it will be an opportunity to experience God together. We will be encouraging facemasks and be maintaining the 2m social distance - this will limit numbers to just under 50, but people can sit in household groups. We be using video from our online church, as we are not allowed to sing. We will not be offering communion until we have assessed the building for being able to manage this safely, and we cannot yet offer Kids Church or creche, or serve tea and coffee.

