

Sunday 8th November 2020

The paper-version Service

The church is meeting on paper and online

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 love us, hear us, and receive us. Help us to respond in love, listening, and receiving. Forgive us when we fall short and help us to respond in worship, walking forwards in your company, and sharing your presence and peace with all whom we come into contact. In the name of Jesus and for the glory of your name we pray. **Amen**

Song:

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder,
Consider all the worlds Thy Hands have made.
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, how great Thou art*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees.
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
and hear the brook and feel the gently breeze

Then sings my soul...

And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in
That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin

Then sings my soul...

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation,
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart.
Then shall I bow with humble adoration,
And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art

Then sings my soul...

Read: Luke 17:20-37

What will it look like? (A summary of the talk given by Howard Wright)

So here, after the joy of the vulnerable and marginalised, accessing the Kingdom (chapters 13-16). Jesus is asked by the Pharisees about when the Kingdom of God would come.

The Pharisees and pretty much all the Jews, including the disciples, understood the Kingdom of God as a return to the glory days of the Davidic kingdom – this, though viewed somewhat through rose-tinted glasses, was when David and his son Solomon ruled the known world, and the people of Israel enjoyed great wealth and peace.

Challenging this idea, Jesus replies: The coming of the kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, “Here it is,” or “There it is,” because the kingdom of God is within you. And he then tells his disciples about the future.

Prophecies tend to be forth-telling, pointing out the perspective of God today. Sometimes they stray into foretelling, describing the future. When they do, the immediate and the distant are often brought together in much the same way that we might view a mountain range believing that all the mountains are a similar distance away.

Here we have, in my view, it’s worth noting that earlier Bible scholars have previously got prophecies about Jesus the Messiah hopelessly wrong, so this is just my view! So, here we have three things brought together. The immediate, Jesus death, the little way off, the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70 (just over 30 years after Jesus ascension) and the distant, with second coming of Jesus and judgement.

1. So, firstly, it’s here now!

In Jesus’ response to the Pharisees, he’s saying the future has begun. The kingdom is already here. For me, he referring both to himself, I am here, and you don’t recognise me, and also to the fact that the Kingdom begins within us, with our transformation and the work of the Holy Spirit in us and through us.

Charles Colson, who was jailed over the American Watergate Scandal, but in prison became a Christian wrote: “Where there is hope it is in the fact that the kingdom of God has come to earth. It’s a kingdom that comes not in a temporary takeover of political structures, but it is a

lasting takeover of the human heart by the rule of a holy God.”

This does not mean the Kingdom is hiding. But it is within us, God with us, in us and around us – us living, dwelling in the presence of God, as it was supposed to be, and will now always be.

The challenge is whether we see this and live it. Paul writes, (2 Corinthians 4:4) ‘The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.’

- The Kingdom is seen as we act with Jesus’ values, in selfless love, grace, kindness, generosity.
- The Kingdom is seen as we experience peace in turmoil, joy in hardship and love even in the face of an enemy.
- Whether these things are daily irritants, pandemics or, wars – past or present as we remember on this Remembrance Sunday.
- We pray, Your Kingdom come, Your will be done. Do we then spot God at work within us and around us and cooperate with Him?

2. Secondly, wait.

We want it fixed now, not least pandemics and wars, but God is working to his own timetable, as Peter wrote: ‘The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.’ (2 Peter 3:9)

Not just the Pharisees, but the disciples also asked Jesus about when and where the Kingdom would appear, they were impatient.

Noah spent 120 years building his boat. Can you imagine undertaking that kind of project? That is extraordinary perseverance, faithfulness, and patience.

We are also called to this same perseverance, faithfulness, and patience as we wait for God to act. To join in building the Kingdom here and around us as we wait for the return of Christ and the Kingdom to be complete.

How do we stay patient? It starts with trust. In a war the soldiers have to trust their commanding officers, in an apprenticeship, the apprentice has to trust the master craftsman – for us today as then, some things

don't make sense, but we have to trust our God, that one day they will.

Jesus points to his own suffering coming first before the Kingdom's fulfilment. Jesus suffered and died for us. He is trustworthy. His resurrection proves how trustworthy he is and that there is a glorious future to come. When all many of things will be well.

There is a God upon the throne, and he is in control – we must stand.

In Chronicles 20:17 with people of God facing an overwhelming army, God says: 'Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.'

This is echoed by Paul in Ephesians with his call to stand in chapter 6. And Jesus stood before Pilate with dignity and in full confidence of the deliverance of God, despite all that he immediately faced.

Be alert to the Kingdom at work in you and be confident of the deliverance of God.

3. Thirdly, be ready, it will be sudden and unmistakable.

Pretty much every former generation has believed Jesus will return in their time, except ours! We've no time for Christ's return and Kingdom coming, we've things to do. We have other plans.

The people of Noah's and Sodom's day are named by Jesus, but only for their lack of readiness. They had other plans.

Jesus tells his disciples to be ready. His return will be unmistakable – don't be fooled by others claiming knowledge – and it will be sudden.

Commenting upon people's oblivious-to-the-risks behaviour a GP commented in a meeting recently: 'don't people know there's a pandemic?' Many are trying to live like nothing's happening whilst the world struggles to contain this virus.

In the same way many, perhaps at times even us, live oblivious to the return of Christ and the judgement that awaits.

In AD70 the Roman army marched into Jerusalem and destroyed it,

various other catastrophes have occurred since, wars, including World Wars, famines, diseases, coronavirus, these are not the return of Jesus, but they are a sign of the brokenness of the world and how sin has corrupted creation including our own humanity, and they are signal of God's coming judgement.

Jesus picks our Lot's wife and challenges us – Remember Lot's wife! 33 Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it. Don't be

like her, who longed for her own life back, but look forward, risk your life for the kingdom.

The missionary martyr, Jim Elliot said: 'He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.'

So, notice the Kingdom at work, in you and around you, join in, waiting patiently, faithfully for Jesus, and be ready, for one day judgement will come and a glorious future awaits.

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)*

- Pray for this day, and the coming week
- Pray for the nations, their leaders, and peoples pray for justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, for neighbours, for family and friends
- Pray for the Church

Third Sunday before advent: Almighty Father, whose will is to restore all things in your beloved Son, the King of all: govern the hearts and minds of those in authority, and bring the families of the nations, divided and torn apart by the ravages of sin, to be subject to his just and gentle rule; 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.

 0800 804 8044
DailyHOPE
A free phone line of hymns,
reflections and prayers