

Sunday 29th 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, Sovereign Lord and Holy King, thank you for your extraordinary grace that welcomes us. Help us this day know the full extent of your love, to receive your forgiveness, and live in your grace. Lead us by your Spirit in worship to you now, in the name of Jesus. **Amen**

Song:

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;
tender to me the promise of his word;
in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his Name!
Make known his might, the deeds his arm has done;
his mercy sure, from age to age to same;
his holy Name--the Lord, the Mighty One.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by.
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word!
Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure.
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord
to children's children and for evermore!

Read: Luke 1:46-55

The King Introduced. A summary of the talk given by Howard Wright.

Mary and her nation are in lockdown. There are restrictions on movement, meetings, and behaviour. Not through a virus but through an occupying force – the mighty Roman Empire.

The Church through history has been familiar with lockdown. I don't think I can complain about having to meet with our church reading this paper or watching a video from my armchair. The early church to avoid persecution were driven, literally underground, into the catacombs to worship alongside dead bodies.

Continuing through the centuries the church has faced with the rest of the world, plagues, most much more devastating than Covid-19, wars and because of Christ, extensive persecution with restrictions including imprisonment and death.

So, Mary's song, a song in lockdown has encouragement and challenge for us today.

God is mindful and merciful!

See verses 48 and 50.

We struggle to be attentive to the moment, hence mindfulness is a much-discussed topic of our age. But God is very present, omnipresent, and fully attentive to his creation. He



is attentive to us all – he knows the hairs on our heads says Jesus – and he is attentive to Mary. He knows and he cares.

And he particularly knows and responds to the humble, the vulnerable, and the downtrodden.

God is mindful of us, and as we join in the family business of the Kingdom, we are to be similarly mindful of others, especially, the least, the last and the lost.

There was a great response to our Harvest appeal. Some £3,746 was raised and we'll have an opportunity as a Church family to give again at Christmas. But this is about money and more. God gives himself in his Son, how can we share our lives, our time, homes, and other resources, with those around us – let us be mindful, and respond as God does.

He has done mighty things!

See verses 51-55.

Firstly, God has scattered the proud and brought down rulers. God is righteous and just. He will judge and all things will be put right.

We instinctively want things to be as they should be – injustice, suffering, and disease are wrong and we want them sorted. Part of the sorting is judgement, final justice delivered. And Jesus and the whole Bible is clear that does happen in part now, but also that this will happen in completeness at Christ's return.

The warning is that some of us might be surprised, as our hidden motives, attitudes and behaviours are revealed.

Secondly, God, lifts-up the humble, feeds the hungry and helps the helpless.

Justice delivered is, judgement for the oppressor, and it is, redemption and restitution for the oppressed. Jesus quotes Isaiah in declaring his purpose: Read Luke 4:18-19. God invites us to be part of the healing, the redemption and restitution today. As the carol, O Little Town of Bethlehem says of Jesus, 'Be born in us today'.

Mary is blessed as she participates in God's redemptive plan. We too are invited in, to be blessed as we participate in God's redemptive plan. Christ is made increasingly present in the world by us bringing to birth Good News, in acts of love, joy and peace and encouraging others to know Jesus, the Saviour King.

The response is praise...

'My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, ...'

... but we may need to wait:

It was some months after this song that Jesus was born, 33 years until his resurrection and we continue to wait for his return. Deliverance might come for this pandemic and the resulting restrictions a little sooner, but this is only a small victory. The world has been dramatically rearranged, and we have little idea yet what the long-term impact will be on our lives socially, economically, and environmentally – to name but three categories. Life is not yet how God intended life to be, and even more, not yet as glorious as God will make it!

Advent is time to clear our minds and remember that we are not there yet. We need to be careful that in our busyness preparing celebrations for the anniversary of Christ's first coming, that we do not fail to be ready for His second coming.

So let us live daily in the presence of God, bringing his Kingdom now, being the antidote to the world's sickness, through acts of love, joy, and peace in the name of Christ.

We may need to wait but Jesus is King. He can be born in us today in our attitudes, and actions. 'O Come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel.'

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

First Sunday of Advent: Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him 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.



A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers