

# Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December

## The paper-version Service



*The church is meeting on paper, online and in the buildings* Responding to God's Love

All of our services are online [www.goodshepherdfourmarks.org.uk](http://www.goodshepherdfourmarks.org.uk) but this weekly sheet captures our Sunday service for those without internet.

**To Begin:** Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe, light a candle 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:** Almighty God, thank you your majesty has no limits, and your Kingdom is unstoppable. Help us receive your grace and forgiveness today and help us like Zechariah rejoice in you coming among us as Saviour and King. Meet us by your Spirit as we worship today and may we, like John the Baptist, announce your coming in our attitudes, actions, and words. **Amen**

### **Song:**

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;  
Naught be all else to me, save that  
thou art -  
Thou my best thought, by day or by  
night;  
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my  
light.

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my  
true word;  
I ever with thee and thou with me,  
Lord.  
Thou my great Father; thine own may  
I be,  
Thou in me dwelling and I one with  
thee.

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty  
praise;  
Thou mine inheritance, now and  
always;  
Thou and thou only first in my heart,  
High King of heaven, my treasure  
thou art.

High King of heaven, my victory won,  
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright  
heaven's sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever  
befall,  
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

**Read:** Luke 1:67-80

***The King is Announced.*** A summary of the talk given by Lorna Littlewood.

In Luke 1 we find Zechariah with an 8-day old son. It's been 400 years since anyone claims to have heard directly from God, 400 years of silence and 9 months since Zechariah has spoken a word at all since he was visited by the angel Gabriel and learnt of his wife's miraculous pregnancy and the extraordinary role that his son would fulfil in the Kingdom of God.

I'm grateful to say I've not experienced a period as long as 400 years without hearing from God, but I expect I'm not alone in sometimes feeling like God has been on mute. We're coming up to Christmas and about to celebrate the joy of "God with us," and I have to remind myself that God is always with us and in us by his spirit – not just at Christmas. In seasons of what feels like silence, I must pursue God all the more... perhaps that's the point.

So, we find Zechariah and Elizabeth with their 8-day old son who is yet to be named. The assumption is that he will share his father's name, but this not the case. This child has already been named by God himself; "You are to give him the name John" the angel had said. It is only when Zechariah reaches for a writing tablet and indicates the name of his

child, that God opens his lips, and his voice is restored. Zechariah's response is to praise God, and in doing so he leads all the people around him to wonder at what God is doing here and who this child will be. These people have witnessed Zechariah's silence, and now they have witnessed his restoration. This has the fingerprints of God all over it and it's all everyone can talk about. John at this point is only 8 days old, but already, people have their expectations about his involvement in God's Kingdom.



"What part will this child grow up to play in the Kingdom of God?"

I think this can be a really powerful question to ask of any child, and I would encourage all of us to take an active role in praying for the children in our church, in our community and in our families.

John would grow up to point people to Jesus and to prepare the way for him. The truth is that all of us share in that purpose. We're currently in the lead up to remembering Jesus'

birth over 2000 years ago, but we know that Jesus is coming again, and we share now in John's role of preparing the way for Him; pointing those around us to Him to share in the Kingdom he has invited us all to.

Zechariah knew that God was here, and he was involved. 400 years of silence was coming to a momentous crescendo in which God was redeeming his people, fulfilling his promises, and bringing salvation to the whole world. I love that he speaks as though it has already happened. At this point, Jesus hasn't yet been born. Mary and Joseph probably haven't left Nazareth for Bethlehem yet. But Zechariah knows that God is greater than time itself, and the plan about to unfold before him has already been written in prophecies he's been reading his entire life.

The details haven't yet happened, but Zechariah knows that God has it all in hand and he is playing a role in God's plan "to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days."

So, in Jesus,

- God has rescued us
- He has enabled us to serve him without fear

- He has made us holy and righteous  
Rescued us from what? From sin. From the impact of our selfishness which leads to separation from God and ultimately to death. In Jesus, God has taken our deserved punishment upon himself, swapping our sinful verdict with his righteous one. Because of this, we can approach God without fear. We are welcomed into his family and can stand before him clothed in his righteousness, not earned by us, but gifted by Jesus. As part of that family, God welcomes us to get involved in His Kingdom... and Zechariah's next words, although originally spoken specifically about John, now apply to us too.

Read Luke 1:76-79 aloud and hear them for yourself. Hear the calling of God on your life – the purpose he has for you as someone made righteous and clean by the blood of Christ...

God is not silent. He is here, now and he is interested and involved in each one of our lives; if we'll seek him with our whole heart, he promises that we will find him. God is not silent. He has saved us and offered us a place in his family and a chance to serve in his Kingdom. He is coming again, and he invites us, like John, to prepare the way.

**Prayers:** Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:4-6)



- 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

**Second Sunday of Advent:** O Lord, raise up, we pray, your power and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness we are grievously hindered in running the race that is set before us, your bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit, be honour and glory, 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