

# 19<sup>th</sup> September 2021

## The paper-version Service



**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 song from this Sunday's Service set out below.

**Opening Prayer:** Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Song:**

Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
The holy One, is here;  
Come bow before him now  
With reverence and fear  
In him no sin is found  
We stand on holy ground.  
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
The holy One, is here.

Be still, for the power of the Lord  
Is moving in this place:  
He comes to cleanse and heal,  
To minister his grace -  
No work too hard for him.  
In faith receive from him.  
Be still, for the power of the Lord  
Is moving in this place.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord  
Is shining all around;  
He burns with holy fire,  
With splendour he is crowned:  
How awesome is the sight  
Our radiant king of light!  
Be still, for the glory of the Lord  
Is shining all around.

**Read: John 14:15-31 – God our Counsellor**

*A summary of the talk given by Rob Hughes.*

John speaks of the 'Holy Spirit', the Counsellor, third person of the Trinity; and if we think of that Spirit as the agent or agency of God, we will not go far wrong.

Until quite recently one aspect of that agency seems to have gone largely unnoticed: Understanding the Spirit as an 'Advocate', remind us first of **our** own sinfulness and how much we need someone to intercede with God for us. We are less inclined to realise how crucial it **also** is that someone or something speaks-up in defense of Creation. The miracle of this life, the primary expression of God in human experience, is not immune from harm. And it shouldn't be hard to appreciate that the best means of protecting life is to live by 'goodness', to honour the commands of love; to respect the gift of life and take care of Creation.



God's first work - the miracle of Creation - is the gift of life through which we receive our 'selves', lives imbued with the goodness of God.

God's gift is not an **act** of goodness - as though goodness was just something that is 'done'; it's an outcome, a consequence of God's goodness. Our likeness to God is in the goodness of the life we have received. The words 'goodness' and 'life' describe one another.

But although lives - indeed all nature - thrive only by goodness, we do not behave towards it with the goodness. We are not grateful. Full of our own complaints, we go our own way. And, little by little, from early in life, our inheritance of goodness withers and dies, overcome by the trials of life. Thank goodness, then, for God's second work in Jesus Christ, through which our lives are renewed, restored to goodness, and we are saved from ourselves!

We are revived, nourished and inspired by Jesus, restored to goodness - not just for ourselves but crucially also to God: For implicit in our being is that we, too, should care for the world, as agents of God, as emanations of God's goodness. And in that way we can use the capacity we call love to speak up against the enemies of goodness - to oppose whatever lies in life's way - be it greed, selfishness, hubris, hatred, profit, ambition, jealousy, cruel ideology. It's a long and sin-filled list.

Here, in John's Gospel, we see the goodness embodied by Jesus is constantly under attack, and it brings us to realise how important God's strength is, that permanent presence of the Holy Spirit within us. Without it we would run from conflict; we would live in fear. "Do not let your hearts be troubled" Jesus says, "do not be afraid" v27.

Jesus says in verse 12: Anyone who has faith in me will do what I've been doing; in fact they will do greater things." His death and resurrection will equip them - even them - to join in the work. He will show himself, he says in verse 21. He will stir up their goodness; make it reality. He will send them an 'Advocate', verse 26, a power, the Power of the Holy Spirit.



God's act of Creation has given us ourselves - birthed from the essence of goodness. But, from the moment of our launch from the waters of Creation into this world, the good in us confronts opposition. Loving makes us vulnerable, showing kindness we might appear as weak,

deferring to others we might be pushed aside. So we learn to put 'fears' before goodness. We deny good. See Genesis 1: 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25 and 31. We deny it to ourselves, to God and to Creation.

In Luke 18:9 Jesus says: "Why do you call me good. No one is good except God." The point is that goodness lies only in what God has made; beauty and wonder is to be experienced. It calls for our joyful acknowledgement, our loving response. And when it is brought low, it is to be restored, rescued by what St Paul calls 'the fruits of the Spirit' (Galatians 5:22-23) ... .. at least, that is what ought to happen!

So then, while it is true that when we receive the Holy Spirit we have a presence who intercedes for us with God - that we might be forgiven, it is also true that same Spirit is our teacher, inspiration and strength through who's agency we will know what love demands of us ....we will know how we ought to respond.

It is well to be reminded of our unique places in Creation. Not only are we made 'in the image and likeness of God', (Genesis 1:26-27), but our lives are essential to the work of Creation. We are here because God ordains it, because we are needed.

**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 justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, for neighbours, for family and friends.
- Pray for the Church.

**Collect: 16<sup>th</sup> after Trinity:** *Lord of creation, whose glory is around and within us: open our eyes to your wonders, that we may serve you with reverence and know your peace at our lives' end, through Jesus Christ our Lord. 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:** We are now holding services in the building on Sundays at 8am. and 9.30am. And we are now live streaming the 9.30 service. This Paper Service will continue for the moment but will now become available the week after the service, rather than the week before.

Next week we mark Harvest. We will distribute a Harvest paper service along with our regular service next week.

Further information is on our website or by ringing our vicar, Howard. 01420 563344.

