

*The material has been prepared by Rosie Beal and she will be leading the worship via zoom.
Whether you are joining us online or using a paper copy you are very welcome.*

*Now, as usual, we invite you to be still and spend a few moments in quiet, preparing for
worship*

Order of Service – Christchurch - 22 November 2020

Welcome

Hymn: Come let us sing with joy to the Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GG0kmdPtpYo>

Psalm 100 A Psalm of thanksgiving

1 Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.

2 Worship the LORD with gladness; come into his presence with singing.

3 Know that the LORD is God. It is he that made us, and we are his;[a] we are his people,
and the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his
name.

5 For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all
generations.

Prayer of Praise & Adoration,

How can we praise you in life's ordinary moments, bus, car or train, pedestrian moments, at
home and employment, in isolation, in lockdown with all those distractions?

How can we praise you?

How can we praise you when time is so precious, appointments and targets distracting our
focus, muddying waters, made clean for your purpose?

How can we praise you?

How can we praise you?

Through all our actions, a smile and a greeting, a shoulder to lean on, a word in due season,
love and compassion, in all situations

THAT'S HOW WE CAN PRAISE YOU AMEN

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Heavenly Father, we want to thank you for blessing us so freely. This morning, we pray not only for our loved ones but also for those around us in positions of need. When we have food, help us to remember the hungry; When we have employment, help us to remember the jobless; When we have a home, help us to remember those who have no home at all; When we are without pain, help us to remember those who suffer, And in remembering, help us to destroy our complacency; to have compassion for those around us and to be concerned enough to help by word and deed, those who cry out for what we take for granted. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Dear Heavenly Father, we bow our heads before you and confess that all too often we have forgotten that we are Yours. Sometimes, we can live our lives as if there is no God and then we fall short of being a credible witness to You.

For these things we ask your forgiveness and ask for your strength. Give us clear minds and open hearts so we may witness to You in our world. Remind us to be who You would have us to be regardless of what we are doing or who we are with. Hold us to You and build our relationship with You and with those You have given us on earth. 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.

Reading Matthew 25 verses 31-46

Hymn: All people that on earth do dwell

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NC5FfEavPM4>

Reflection The sheep & the goats

It is not always easy to understand Jesus's parables. We sometimes get bogged down in the details and that's why it's important not to stray too far (excuse the pun) from the main point He is trying to make—and the parable of the sheep and the goats is a good example.

As we heard in our Gospel Reading and throughout Jesus's ministry, He talked a great deal about Himself as the good shepherd and the people who followed Him as sheep.

The imagery was entirely appropriate as sheep are known to be defenceless and reliant upon a shepherd for care, protection, and direction.

In this parable, the King separates the sheep from the goats. Unlike sheep, goats are known for being headstrong, self-reliant, and independent. For the purposes of Jesus's story, they contrast perfectly with the sheep.

And so, we learn that the sheep are given their inheritance for the services they rendered to the King. When the King recounts the specific works which they did for Him, they seem really surprised. "When did we feed you, clothe you, or visit you in prison," they ask and then He tells them that, when they were doing kindnesses for others, they were in effect doing them for Him.

As if that illustration didn't drive His point home, Jesus continues His parable regarding the goats

He gives a similar message but from a negative perspective. The goats are condemned because of what they did not do. To their eternal shame, they did not realise that passing up opportunities to do good for others was the same as passing up opportunities to serve their King. And the result? This mistake has cost them their inheritance.

This raises a question then - Is salvation based on works?

Because this parable ties the sheep and the goats' behaviour to their eternal destiny, it's easy to walk away assuming that our eternal destination rests on what we do or fail to do but that's not really the point Jesus is driving at.

The Gospel's message is clear throughout Scripture that "all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). It is by faith, through grace, that we are reconciled to God.

We must not miss out on the important message that salvation should transform us into the kinds of people who serve their King and Lord by doing good for others.

So, what should we take away from this parable? Here are four points we could learn from the story of the sheep and the goats:

1. The sheep did not know what they did

It is remarkable to realise that the sheep are surprised by this turn of events. They weren't serving others to be noticed or to curry favour with the King. They were doing good because it was in their nature to care for others.

2. Little things matter a lot

The King commends the sheep for everything from feeding the hungry to clothing the naked. But He also recognises something as simple as a drink given to the thirsty. The point is that there is no service too small for Jesus to recall and remember.

3. Don't leave good undone

The King's interaction with the goats is the most sobering aspect of this parable. It is one thing to celebrate the positive and kind things someone does for others but it is another thing entirely to realise that the King is paying attention to opportunities to help others that we neglect to act upon.

It is a mistake to assume that becoming more like Jesus is merely a case of stopping bad behaviour. The more Christlike we become, the more our lives will be poured out in service to others.

4. We need to put in the effort

So many of the kindnesses the King mentions are ones the sheep would have had to go out of their way to perform. No one just happens upon someone in prison and stops by for a visit. We need to have a plan to spend time with someone in that position. If we genuinely want to be sheep that are commended, we will be on the lookout for ways to love and serve the people around us.

Becoming people who do good

It is by God's grace that we are reconciled to God. There is absolutely nothing we can do to earn the privilege of becoming God's children but that doesn't mean that what we do isn't important. Jesus explained it to the Pharisees this way:

Make a tree good and its fruit will be good or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit" (Matthew 12:33).

In the story of the sheep and goats, Jesus wants us to understand that our choices reveal the kingdom to whom we belong and that we have chosen to live by His Commands – “Love the Lord, Your God, with all your heart and Love your neighbours as yourselves”. Amen

Prayers of Intercession

Life-Giving God, we pray for the many people who have contracted the corona virus in all parts of the world. Bring comfort to those grieving their loved ones who have died and bring peace to those who are worried, fearful and uncertain as the virus spreads.

We also pray for governments and authorities who are developing strategies to contain and deal with the virus and those in the health services who may be risking their own lives to care for sick patients.

Everlasting God, we thank you for our church ministers in the North Wiltshire Circuit and pray for all who preach your word. We ask that you inspire, lead and nurture us as disciples, as we reach out to those in need in our communities and in our world.

Creator God, we pray for our world leaders, especially those in the USA at this difficult time, our national and community leaders and those in public office dealing with difficult situations especially those involved with the serious problems associated with the Pandemic

Father God, we pray for our children and grandchildren who are now back to Schools, Colleges and Universities to continue their education. We especially pray that all places of education will find ways of making teaching and learning safe as well as effective in such strange and difficult times.

Loving God, we ask for your wisdom to discern your direction in our lives and ask for your help to discern how to deal with others we meet in our daily routines, particularly as we have been learning the differences between the sheep and the goats.

Gracious God, we pray for all who we know who are housebound and in nursing homes; those in hospitals, in recovery and rehabilitation. We thank you for our local hospitals, health centres and clinics and for all those working in sheltered accommodation and care homes. In a moment of quiet, we remember those who are unwell at this time.

Merciful God, we pray for all those departed this life and for those who are bereaved by their passing. Help us to be sympathetic, caring and loving with the bereaved and always ready to help practically and to pray diligently in their time of greatest need.

Almighty God, we thank you that you continue to guide and direct us throughout our lives until the time when we are called home to be with You

In Jesus's Holy and mighty name, we offer these prayers to You. Amen

Hymn: O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dBLRsUMtuFQ>

Blessing

The blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be among you and remain with you always.

Amen