

5th November, 2023

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.

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:

The King of love my shepherd is,
whose goodness faileth never.
I nothing lack if I am his,
and he is mine forever.

Where streams of living water flow,
my ransomed soul he leadeth;
and where the verdant pastures
grow,
with food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish, oft I strayed,
but yet in love he sought me;
and on his shoulder gently laid,
and home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill,
with thee, dear Lord, beside me;
thy rod and staff my comfort still,
thy cross before to guide me.



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

Thou spreadst a table in my sight;
thy unction grace bestoweth;
and oh, what transport of delight
from thy pure chalice floweth!

And so through all the length of days,
thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
within thy house forever.

Never failing, Ruler of my heart
Everlasting, Lover of my soul
On the mountain high or in the valley
low
The King of Love my Shepherd is
The King of Love my Shepherd is

And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never
Good Shepherd, may I sing Your
praise
Within Your house forever
Within Your house forever

The Sermon by Timothy James.

Read Romans 8:31-39, Matthew 24:1-14: Jesus Messiah

In our study of Matthew's gospel, we are nearing the last act. Jesus has spoken to his followers about his own approaching end, and now he talks about the end of the age.

We must understand what his followers, and the Jewish people, expected with the coming of the Messiah. They were looking for God to send a king to save them. The disciples seem now to associate Jesus' mission with the coming of the new Messianic age, and of course they are right – that is exactly what is going on. But they do not understand what the new age will be like, and how the Messianic kingdom will come into being. What will happen to the Temple, to the world and to themselves?

The answer in all three cases seems at first to be “nothing good”. The Temple was destroyed, as Jesus foretold (v.2), about forty years later. The world has indeed suffered war, famine, earthquake and all kinds of misfortune, and it still does, as our daily news makes only too plain. And the disciples themselves, and many followers of Jesus since, suffered the persecutions he mentions. We ourselves suffer very little for our faith, but many Christians today still follow Jesus at peril of their lives.

But if we read on to the final two verses (13-14), there is hope.

In the light of Jesus' warning and guidance, how should we live our lives?

There are negative commands:

1. Don't be fooled (v.4, and also v.23)! There are indeed many who would like to deceive us into following something other than the truth of Jesus to cope with the evils around us, but we are not to be led astray. There is only one truth upon which we can rely.
2. Don't be alarmed (v.6)! It is easy to fear that something has gone wrong, and that God's plan for history is not working out. But these things must take place, and we are not to be knocked off balance.
3. Don't get hung up on “when”! Jesus never answers the question asked in v.3, because the timing is not the important thing. Indeed, as he goes

on to say in v.36, nobody knows the answer, not even Jesus himself. It is easy to be sucked into playing detective games with prophecy, or to look at current events and think “Now, surely?” But we must avoid this; it is not important, or we would have been told.

The two positive commands are:

1. Stand firm and endure whatever comes (v.13). As Paul says at the end of Romans 8, nothing in all creation can separate us from God’s love in Jesus. We can do this because we have a firm and solid foundation in the truth of Jesus. We have what the world desperately wants and needs, a faith and a person upon which we can wholly rely, and so ...
2. Proclaim the good news to all nations (v.14). Look again at the great commission at the end of Matthew’s gospel (28: 18-20). Our job is undoubtedly to start with the nation in which we live. Our neighbours and families need to know the good news of the kingdom in such a troubling world, so that they, too, can endure to the end and be saved.

We live in the Messianic age, and it is the age of the Gospel.

Prayer:

Father, thank you that we live in the age of your Son. Thank you for his warning and guidance. Give us strength to endure to the end, and to proclaim the good news of his and your kingdom while we still have time.

For his sake,

Amen.

Collect: The Fourth Sunday before Advent: *Almighty and eternal God, you have kindled the flame of love in the hearts of the saints: grant to us the same faith and power of love, that, as we rejoice in their triumphs, we may be sustained by their example and fellowship; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, 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 forever. Amen.*

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, The Good Shepherd, 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 are live streaming the 9.30 service. This Paper Service will continue for the moment and is generally available the week after the service.

- Tea and Chat & Bowls: Wed. Nov. 15th at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: Nov. 22nd at 11am, in Church Hall.
- Remembrance Sunday 12th November.
- Tea and Praise: TBA.
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays.
- COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.