

10th September, 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:

I stand amazed in the presence
Of Jesus the Nazarene,
And wonder how He could love me,
A sinner condemned, unclean.

How marvellous! How wonderful!
And my song shall ever be:
How marvellous! How wonderful!
Is my Saviour's love for me!

For me it was in the garden,
He prayed: "Not my will, but Thine."
He had no tears for His own griefs,
But sweat-drops of blood for mine.

In pity angels beheld Him,
And came from the world of light
To strengthen Him in the sorrows
He bore for my soul that night.

How marvellous! How wonderful!
And my song shall ever be:
How marvellous! How wonderful!
Is my Saviour's love for me!



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

He took my sins and my sorrows,
He made them His very own;
He bore the burden to Calvary,
And suffered, and died alone.

How marvellous! How wonderful!
And my song shall ever be:
How marvellous! How wonderful!
Is my Saviour's love for me!

When with the ransomed in glory
His face I at last shall see,
'Twill be my joy through the ages
To sing of His love for me.

How marvellous! How wonderful!
And my song shall ever be:
How marvellous! How wonderful!
Is my Saviour's love for me!

The Sermon by Rev. Howard Wright.

Read Romans 12:9-21 & Matthew 18:15-20: Model Jesus

Matthew 18 is about relationships in the Kingdom of God. Today about bringing others home.

What's it like in your family? In families we have to find a way of getting along, or tragically we separate and just avoid each other. Often with people living with grudges and resentments – which niggle away, all their lives.

And the Christian church is sadly no different. The Christian Gospel is about love, encountering, and loving the God who is love and this being demonstrated by our love for each other. Yet, despite these high ideals, to which of course we should strive, we are works in progress, not yet completed and we can fall out in the church too.

Jesus teaches us principles about relationships when things fall from the ideal, and specifically, about the Christian who sins. So how are we to do this?

Firstly, be clear about what Jesus wants:

Jesus wants the brother or sister to listen – this is mentioned three times. So, as we will see later, we need to go in a way in which they can hear.

Jesus wants them to be restored. Read Paul's comments in Galatians 6:1-2 and James' in James 5:19-20. Jesus himself said he had come to '...to seek and to save the lost.' (Luke 19:10)

Jesus wants us to live in love and unity – for in this unity is the presence of God. Notice Matthew 18:18-20. At first these verses might seem a strange passage in this context, but the Jewish community, they understood that the presence of God – the *shekinah* glory – was with them as they met to share, especially around the Word of God (Old Testament to them, the whole Bible to us). That God would want to, and is, with us is a truly wonderful thing. As we celebrate communion we use the words, 'The Lord is here. His Spirit is with us.' The presence of God is with us when we share in unity. God is passionate about us being unified in love, if you're not sure about this, read John 17, especially verses 20-23.

Secondly, be clear about your role:

We do not go as judge. Even Jesus said, (John 12:47) '*For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.*' And Jesus warns us, as we saw in the sermon on the mount – Matthew 7:1-5. See also John 8:10-11. Jesus looked to catch people in, not catch them out. He was clear about the consequences of sin – judgment and Hell – but he was always encouraging us to turn in the direction of God.

We do not go for revenge – read Romans 12:19-21. We, like Jesus, go to serve.

Thirdly, be of the same mind as Christ

Read Philippians 2:1-11.

Jesus loved people to repentance. *‘God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?’* Romans 2:4. Jesus showed huge respect to all and respectful of the dignity of others – we are to go on our own, not tell everyone else. We go not as a gossip wanting to find out more, but out of genuine concern for the other.

We are to challenge the other but with humility and welcome – being careful not to condemn, or to cause the other to stumble, but to build them up and invite them back into the way of Christ – not our way. It is not a sin to offend our preferences and opinions, but it is a sin to step against God and out of relationship with him and with his family.

We’ve already said, Jesus wants them to listen and hear. How can we help them to hear, to measure and weigh what we’ve said? By genuine love, with a sober, gentle presentation of the facts as we understand them.

Our attitude matters. Are we going convinced of our own rightness, or are we acting out of love for a brother or sister, passionately wanting God’s best for them. Read Romans 12:9-10.

If they don’t listen? Jesus tells us to treat an unrepentant Christian as though they are a pagan, or tax collector; but, how does Jesus treat tax collectors? He eats with them! Along with prostitutes and ‘pagans’, Jesus even washes his betrayer’s feet, and he then dies for us all.

We too need to keep loving others. Not ostracising them but with love drawing them back to Jesus. Not being soft on the consequences of sin, death, and the fires of hell. But being clearer about the call of the God who loves, them and us to death, literally, than the God who will judge.

A caveat: be safe. But don’t put yourself in danger. If the sinner is an abuser and dangerous person don’t risk your own safety, but talk with others in authority first.

Fourthly ask God in

God’s presence is promised, in the context of the Christian church family living in love. Surely we want more of the presence of God?

This love, wants the very best for the other. It’s not an anything goes – even the most liberal of parents will, unless completely mad, deny a child their right

to run freely into a busy road. It requires courage and grace to encourage and challenge each other.

But not only does, and will, our church family experience the presence of the living God, it also, reveals God's glory. As, Jesus said, '*... By your love for one another, will all know that you are my disciples.*' John 13:35.

So let's ask God for more of his presence.

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, neighbours, and for family & friends.
- Pray for the Church.

Collect: Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity: *Almighty God, whose only Son has opened for us a new and living way into your presence: give us pure hearts and steadfast wills to worship you in spirit and in truth; 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. 20th Sept. at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: Wed. 27th Sept at 11am, in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise, for Harvest: Sunday October 1st at 3pm in Church.