

# 16<sup>th</sup> July, 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 church's one foundation  
is Jesus Christ her Lord;  
she is His new creation,  
by water and the Word;  
from heav'n He came and sought  
her  
to be His holy bride;  
with His own blood He bought her,  
and for her life He died.

Elect from ev'ry nation,  
yet one o'er all the earth,  
her charter of salvation,  
one Lord, one faith, one birth;  
one holy Name she blesses,  
partakes one holy food,  
and to one hope she presses,  
with ev'ry grace endued

The church shall never perish!  
Her dear Lord, to defend,



The Good  
Shepherd  
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

to guide, sustain, and cherish,  
is with her to the end;  
tho' there be those that hate her,  
and false sons in her pale,  
against the foe or traitor  
she ever shall prevail.

'Mid toil and tribulation,  
and tumult of her war,  
she waits the consummation  
of peace for evermore;  
till with the vision glorious  
her longing eyes are blest,  
and the great church victorious  
shall be the church at rest.

O happy ones and holy!  
Lord, give us grace that we,  
like them, the meek and lowly,  
on high may dwell with Thee..

## **The Sermon by Rev. Howard Wright.**

### **The King's road. Read Isaiah 40:1-5, Matthew 7:13-29**

Roy said last week: '...the Sermon on the Mount is about living life in the blessing of God and knowing God as Father.'

Jesus' sermon, has grabbed us at the beginning – the beatitudes – and held us with substance and challenge through-out the middle – 5:13-7:12 – and comes the sting in the tail, a decision is required. Are you 'in' or 'out'?

Jesus presents two options in each of the four 'parables' we've read. In an age of grey, when truth is so often down to how we feel, and sincerity is the final test of reality – this is a tough message. Jesus gives us options of life or death, reward or destruction.

So let's look at these four parables:

#### **Direction (verses 13-14)**

'I am the gate...' Jesus says in John 10 (v.7-10). What's our entry point and what's our direction. In this sermon Jesus presents himself as the Teacher, he has echoed and surpassed Moses. He is the long desired Messiah. The crowds recognised this, see verse 28.

Jesus' renewed version of the 'Law' comes with joy and opportunity – with blessing, but it also comes with challenge. You can be blessed, you can know God as Father, if you'll lay aside your ideas about how you can make something of yourself and come open handed submitting to his best for you.

So will you come? Come this way says Jesus, let go, cut off, gouge out, bitterness, pride, pretence, selfishness, and walk with me. It's a narrow path, sometimes the valley of the shadow of death, but I'll walk with you, I'll comfort and protect you and lead you out. The other way looks easy, it looks fun, but it will end in death.

Which way are we facing? Toward Jesus? Think about the decisions of this past week, decisions about time, energy and money. What guided your decisions? Are we facing and travelling with Jesus or being led by our own selfish passions and ambitions?

Choose the starting point wisely, and keep your eyes on the prize. See Hebrews 11:1-2

#### **Production (verses 15-20)**

Jesus is the starting point – our touchstone – our criteria for testing the genuineness. But there will be others seeking to divert us, 'ferocious wolves'. Those peddling alternative messiahs, and alternative Gospels. These false prophets are seen by their direction of travel, which for them is pointing away from Jesus, and by the fruit of their lives. What is this fruit? What should we look for?

The sermon itself gives us the answer. From the beatitudes, we are to look for humility, peace, righteousness, mercy, kindness, purity of heart. And from the rest

of the sermon, for good deeds like light up and flavour the world, for generosity, for integrity, for those who seek God not lovers of power or money.

And read Paul's alternative list in Galatians 5:22-23. What we produce will reveal who we truly are. Read John 15:5-8. We will be judged by the fruit of our lives.

### **Relationship (verses 21-23)**

Remain in me says Jesus, apart from me you can produce nothing. And this brings us onto the third parable.

How do we differentiate between someone we know and someone we are acquainted with? Some of us use social media and we may have those we follow and those who follow us, whether on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Tick Tock. We may encounter people in the workplace from different departments, friends of friends, but we do we know these people, or are they just faces we recognise, and do they know us?

And where would Jesus fit in with this. People may claim an acquaintance – to borrow a Jane Austin phrase – but not really know us at all. Do we know Jesus, and does he know us, or is he just an acquaintance, a feed on social media, a friend of a friend, or someone we used to know?

Are we checking in with Jesus as often as we check our phones, the Ashes score, the news, or with family members? Take time today, and every day, read God's message to you, the Bible, and talk with Jesus – if you've nothing else to say, then use the prayer Jesus gave his disciples in chapter 6 of this sermon, and don't forget to listen.

### **Durability (verses 24-27)**

Finally, in a summary of all we've heard, we're encouraged to endure. As someone once quipped, 'Moses' laws were written on tablets of stone, we're invited to build on a rock!' How do we build lives that will last. We listen and we act! The truth will out. The foundations of a life are revealed in the storms of life. Read Psalm 127:1. Jesus says, the house will fall flat unless we build wisely, upon the foundations of his truth, his wisdom, his love and his grace.

So, are we 'in' or 'out'?

Jesus invites us in, wants us in, and makes it possible for us to be in. His death upon the cross makes forgiveness possible when we fail.

So keep checking your direction, your fruitfulness, the depth of your relationship and your foundations in Jesus. And let's be encouraging each other. As we grow deeper in God, others will see the fruit of lives transformed, and will have their own direction, purpose, and relationships transformed, becoming disciples who make disciples.

**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: Sixth Sunday after Trinity:** Merciful God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as pass our understanding: pour into our hearts such love toward you that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; 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.19th July at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: 26<sup>th</sup> July at 11am in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise TBA.
- COGS Tots: 2<sup>nd</sup> Mondays.
- COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.