

25th June, 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:

Guide me, O my great Redeemer,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but you are mighty;
hold me with your powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore,
feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain,
where the healing waters flow.
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through.



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,
ever be my strength and shield,
ever be my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside.
Death of death, and hell's
Destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises
I will ever sing to you,
I will ever sing to you.

The Sermon by Rev. Brian Pritchard

The King's Provision. Read Matthew 6: 19-34

Immediately after his baptism and temptation in the wilderness, Jesus announced that the kingdom of God, long promised in the Old Testament, was here. The rule of God had broken in, with the cry: Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. The Sermon on the Mount portrays the repentance, the complete change of mind, and the righteousness which belongs to, which reflects, the Kingdom.

How often are we told 'you Christians are no different from anyone else?' Perhaps what most people see in the church is not counter-culture but conformism. We are to be different!

In the first half of Chapter 6, Jesus describes the Christian's private life, things done in secret place (giving, fasting, prayer). In this second half he is concerned with our public business in the world – questions of money, possessions, food, drink, clothing and ambition. In both halves we are called to be different from the hypocrisy of the religious, and also different from popular culture.

Today's passage has choices. Two treasures – on earth and in heaven; two bodily conditions – light and darkness; two masters – God and money, or mammon; two preoccupations – our bodies and God's kingdom.

Treasure on earth? Or in heaven. Having possessions, making proper provision for the future, enjoying the gifts of our good creator God, are not forbidden. Jesus points the finger at selfish accumulation, where the abundance of possessions is flouted, at the materialism that tethers our hearts to the earth. Holding onto things risks rust, moth, decay, theft. We can't take these material things with us into eternity.

Jesus doesn't explain what treasure in heaven is – but implicitly it is our Christlike character; and as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians, it is our faith, our hope and our love. Our treasure might also be seen in those with whom we have shared our faith, to whom we have opened the door of the gospel, and this can include where we use our money and possessions for Christian causes. We should do everything for Him and Him alone – what are our priorities?

The next choice, light and dark. We must keep our eyes fixed on God – and as we can't actually see God, this has to be picture language. So what do our 'eyes' naturally get drawn to? Are our (spiritual) eyes leading us in the right direction? Do they take us – our mind and our heart – in directions we ought not to go? 'Darkness'?

The third choice. “two masters .. You cannot serve both God and Money (mammon)”. It’s not a question of divided loyalty, choosing 50:50 between them. In Jesus’ example the worker would have been a slave, who was 100% his master’s property. His allegiance to the one master was total. As Christians, our allegiance to God must be total.

It is only when we have made our choice – for heavenly treasure, for light, for God – that we begin to understand how we must behave.

Therefore, do not worry. What Jesus is now saying is a conclusion to an issue he’s just been addressing. Do not be anxious – do not worry – about your life, your body, your clothes. But instead “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”. (vs 33)

In life, once we’ve made a choice, we tend not to think about the choice we didn’t make. This is the essence of Jesus’ teaching. If we’ve committed ourselves to Christ, then he has to be the focus of our mind and energy. We don’t have to be anxious about anything else, because we’ve rejected it.

Was Jesus happy? Look at the images Jesus uses. The birds – Jesus had surely watched them. The beautiful flowers – but the flowers didn’t spend hours in front of the make-up mirror. Jesus had a lively, strong sense of the goodness of the Father, the creator. His teaching grew from, and reflected, his own experience. So for Jesus to say ‘do not worry’ must mean that in this, as in all else, he led by example. He knew how to live in the present, glorying in the goodness of God. For Jesus to say ‘make God your priority’ we need to remember he’s talking of the creator himself, who has filled the world with wonderful mysteries, energy, excitement, and who wants us humans to trust him, love him, and receive their own beauty, energy and excitement from him.

Jesus’ point is: put the world first, and you’ll watch it decay and get moth eaten in your hands. Put God first – and you get the world thrown in.

What do we really set our hearts on? As Christians, our ultimate ambition has to be His kingdom, His righteousness. We are not to worry, but know and share the happiness, the joy, of our Lord Jesus Christ, trusting God to look after our bodies, our life. We need not worry about them.

The only thing we take into eternity is our character, which is to be distinct from what the world admires. From the beginning, God has called his people to be different, to live in obedience to him, with our eyes fixed on Him and our eternal glory.

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: Third Sunday after Trinity: Almighty God, you have broken the tyranny of sin and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts whereby we call you Father: give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service, that we and all creation may be brought to the glorious liberty of the children of God; 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: 28th June & 26th July at 11am in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise TBA.
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays.
- COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.