

26th May, 2024

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:

Have you been to Jesus for the
cleansing power?

Are you washed in the blood of the
Lamb?

Are you fully trusting in His grace this
hour?

Are you washed in the blood of the
Lamb?

Are you washed in the blood,
In the soul-cleansing blood of the
Lamb?

Are your garments spotless? Are they
white as snow?

Are you washed in the blood ...?

Are you washed in the blood ...

Are you walking daily by the Saviour's
side?

Are you washed in the blood of the
Lamb?

Do you rest each moment in the
Crucified?

Are you washed in the blood of the
Lamb?

Are you washed in the blood ...

When the Bridegroom cometh will your
robes be white!

Are you washed in the blood of the
Lamb?

Will your soul be ready for His
presence bright,

And be washed in the blood Are you
washed in the blood ...

Lay aside the garments that are stained
with sin,

And be washed in the blood of the
Lamb;

There's a fountain flowing for the soul
unclean,

O be washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Are you washed in the blood of the
lamb?

The Sermon by Rev. Howard Wright

Read Philippians 1:12-18a and John 15:26-16:11. Proclaiming Christ.

We are back to the Philippians series. A reminder that this is one of Paul's most joyful letters despite the persecution and treatment he experienced in Philippi – see Acts 16. And, despite the fact he's again in prison and, there are those who are against his message and who continue to create trouble for him.

1. The Good News – is Jesus

Paul's primary concern in this passage from his letter is the Gospel. Into a world of bad news we need good news, we need hope. The Gospel – The Good News - is supremely a message of hope. God loves us, and wants to give us grace and peace (1:2). He God rescues us from ourselves and our own failures – through Jesus on the cross, and invites into an eternal relationship with him, starting now. This relationship and eternal future is guaranteed by the physical resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit, to live with and in us today. This *is* amazing Good News.

2. The Good News – is unstoppable

In our uncertain age – elections, cost of living crises, wars, and rumours of wars – we wonder what the outcome will be. There is only one certainty, and only place worth investing. God is King, his Kingdom will prevail, the Gospel will be fulfilled.

Even in Rome, with Paul in prison, what was set to inhibit the Gospel, actually ended up enabling it. There would have been Christians sharing Jesus out of love and humility, but there were, it seems, many others, who stirring trouble, speaking out of selfish, even evil, motives – but Christ was preached! As though, 'all publicity is good publicity'!

Despite being in prison, which for an itinerant preacher was huge problem, more people were getting to hear than would have been possible than just Paul preaching – it's as though, 'everyone' was talking about it. It resulted in people in influential places, the palace guard (:13), others emboldened in their witness (:13), and this and other of the letters being written.

God is in the business of transforming questionable, even evil, human actions into blessing. Such as Joseph, who having been sold into slavery by his brothers becomes their rescuer, and the rescuer of his whole family, said, 'what you meant for harm, God intended for good' (Genesis 50:20). And, of course, most supremely, in the cross and resurrection.

3. The Good News is unstoppable in us.

Paul knows God's purpose for him, and for us is to be witnesses to Jesus – why else are we here? We are called to be witnesses, messengers of the Gospel; through our words and deeds, our speech and our behaviour, to declare Jesus. God wants to use us all, individually and collectively. And he wants to use the circumstances of our lives and the life of our church to be a witness to Jesus, and the fabulous Good News.

Are we going to be wholly available to him? The example of Jesus himself, was as someone available and alert. He was able to be available and alert because of his closeness to the Father, which in turn, was made possible because of his life of prayer and understanding of the scriptures – the Bible.

Paul faced some serious opposition. What gets in our way?

We may say, 'I don't know enough to be able to share Jesus.' But we know enough to know to love God and love your neighbour. We know enough of your own belief about God and like the man born blind can say, 'this I do know' (John 9:25). And you could learn more – do an Alpha Course, read the Bible every day, join a small group, catch-up with sermons online when you miss church.

We may say, 'I'm too old', but Moses was 80 when he started! We may think, no one will believe me. Paul wanted everyone to become a Christian, but he knew that first everyone had to hear about Christ, and then it was their responsibility and the work of the Holy Spirit, as to whether they would respond. In other words, do your job – witness to Jesus – and prayerfully, leave them and God to sort it out.

We may worry, that we could lose our respect, friendships, perhaps even our jobs. Jesus lost his life, and so did 11 of the 12 disciples – just John died a natural death! And, Paul's beheaded tradition tells us. We are not called to throw our lives, respect, or job away, but we are challenged to share Jesus in word and deed.

- And as Paul wrote in Philippians 1:6. '*...he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*' God will come through. The Gospel is unstoppable.

Trinity Sunday: Almighty and everlasting God, you have given us your servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity and in the power of the divine majesty to worship the Unity: keep us steadfast in this faith, that we may evermore be defended from all adversities; 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, St Andrews and 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).

At the Church of the Good Shepherd

- Tea and Chat: June 19th at 2pm in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Bowls: June 19th at 2pm in the Church.
- Coffee and Questions: June 26th at 10.30am in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise: 3pm Sunday, TBA
- The Community Cupboard, 2:45pm every Thursday in Church.

For Further information:

This paper and all parish details are on the website at <https://www.parihofmedsteadandfourmarks.co.uk>