

29th January, 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:

God so loved that He gave His Son
To lay down His life for the sake of us
He bore the weight of our sin and
shame

With a cry He said, "It is finished!"
Christ the Lord overcame the
darkness

He's alive, death has been defeated.

For He made us a way by which we
have been saved

He's the Saviour of the world
So we lift up a shout for His fame and
renown

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord
Jesus, Saviour of the world.

We must spread the word of His soon
return
To reclaim the world for His glory



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

Let the church now sing of this
coming King

Crowned with majesty, our
Redeemer

And He reigns, Ruler of the heavens
And His name is Jesus the Messiah.

For He made us a way by which we
have been saved

He's the Saviour of the world
So we lift up a shout for His fame and
renown

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord
Jesus, Saviour of the world.

Christ the Lord overcame the
darkness

He's alive, death has been defeated
And He reigns, Ruler of the heavens
And His name is Jesus the Messiah.

The Sermon

From Jane Hughes – Family Worker:

What does Love look like? Think about how you might answer this question for the relationships you have. It might look like a smile, an act of kindness, etc.

Read through Romans 5:6-8 focussing on verse 6 and reflect on the question: what does God's love look like?

God acted first, he searched for us, (Luke 19:10) he didn't wait for us to change: 'while we were still sinners Christ died for us.' Think again of your first list of what we think love is, we can love because he first loved us. This love from God is so unlike human love which can be conditional or inconsistent – depending on our circumstances or how we are feeling. God's love is certain, unconditional, unshakable, strong, and powerful, unwavering.

And God didn't just say he loved us, he demonstrated sacrificial love for us. The test of any love is how much it is willing to give, by that standard God's love for us is immeasurable.

Paul, so certain of God's love listed 17 things that cannot separate us from the Love of Christ – see Romans 8:35-39.

Jesus was willing to give his time, energy, reputation, status and very life for us. What is our response to that perfect love?

From Howard Wright – Vicar

As Jane has reminded us, God in love comes to seek and save us (Luke 19:10). We are challenged to respond to this love, and in responding, we are challenged to seek him and his Kingdom (Matthew 6:19-34).

In verses 19-21, we are challenged about our securities and investments. This is not a reckless abandonment of our responsibility to take care of ourselves and our dependants, but a challenge about the location of our security.

Our society encourages us to have sufficient funds for retirement, and savings for a rainy day, but if this becomes our security then we have

invested unwisely, as this money will not fit us for life in the presence of God, that is, the Kingdom of Heaven today or in the future.

We are encouraged to invest in the Kingdom funds. This means building reserves of love and trust in God. Building a depth of relationship with the Father that will enable us to say, 'I know him and he knows me.'

What might this look like in practice? It means studying the Bible and prayer, it means serving (as an act of worship) in love in our daily lives through generosity to others.

In verses 22-27 we are further challenged to fix our eyes on Jesus and glory (Hebrews 12:2). In this world our gaze can wander to all sorts of other 'glories'. These might be our own glory, the recognition and respect of others, the 'shiny' material things of our age, or luxury lifestyle experiences.

Where is our gaze fixed? Philippians 4: 8 says: *'Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.'*

For many in our world their gaze is fixed on money and Jesus is quite blunt about how we cannot serve both God and money. Jesus is not condemning money, but is giving a stark warning about obsessing about and serving, it, for it is a cruel master.

In verses 25-34, we challenged about trust. Jesus encourages us to trust God and not worry about material possessions. We are in a society that is fixated with image. So much is marketed to us on the basis that we can be the person of our own dreams.

It's hard to trust God in our society, but then it has always been so. We are called to fix our eyes again and again on Jesus, to seek his Kingdom and his presence, for nothing else will satisfy. God has a dream for who we should be and it is, that we would be conformed to the likeness of Jesus (Romans 8:29-30). And that requires a new set of priorities, a change of security, a new place to look, and the glory of God to pursue.

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: Fourth Sunday after Epiphany. God our creator, who in the beginning commanded the light to shine out of darkness: we pray that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ may dispel the darkness of ignorance and unbelief, shine into the hearts of all your people, and reveal the knowledge of your glory in the face of 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: *Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new: transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory; 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.*

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. 15th Feb. at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: 22nd Feb at 11am in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise: TBA
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays. COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.