

5th February, 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:

How great the chasm that lay between us

How high the mountain I could not climb

In desperation, I turned to heaven
And spoke Your name into the night
Then through the darkness, Your loving-kindness

Tore through the shadows of my soul
The work is finished, the end is written
Jesus Christ, my living hope

Who could imagine so great a mercy?
What heart could fathom such boundless grace?

The God of ages stepped down from glory

To wear my sin and bear my shame
The cross has spoken, I am forgiven
The King of kings calls me His own
Beautiful Saviour, I'm Yours forever



The Good Shepherd
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

Jesus Christ, my living hope

Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free

Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
You have broken every chain
There's salvation in Your name
Jesus Christ, my living hope

Then came the morning that sealed the promise

Your buried body began to breathe
Out of the silence, the Roaring Lion
Declared the grave has no claim on me

Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free

Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
You have broken every chain
There's salvation in Your name
Jesus Christ, my living hope.

The Sermon

Rev Howard Wright: Responding Hopefully

Read: Ephesians 1:3-23. Matthew 12:15-21.

This week, in Responding to God's Love, we respond hopefully.

The human condition is hopeless. There are two certainties, death and taxes. While we are living longer, many of us struggle with health issues, and as we live longer, we lose so many friends along the way. Additionally, we are living in a financial crises and many nationally lack hope, but how much more, in the two thirds of the world where people are daily hungry or lack adequate shelter. And most hopeless of all we are caught in sin, and therefore in shame and guilt.

Yet, we hope. We cannot help it; it's also part of the human condition. We therefore dream of, and long for better. We hope for better weather, better health, a better job, marriage, even a better eternity – with the folk-religious view of our loved ones smiling down on us.

We glimpse something of these hoped-for better futures in creation with a stunning view, in the sound of a child laughing, the taste of delicious food, or that the smile of a loved one. Fyodor Dostoevsky wrote, *'To live without hope is to cease to live'*.

Hope inspires us, but hope disappointed can destroy us. It is a common saying of sports fans, *'It's the hope that kills'*. With the possibility you might win comes the crushing disappointment when you unexpectedly lose. Hopelessness is a terrible place. Many hope for better, but for many it's an illusion. The better weather, health, relationships, and better eternity, never arrive.

Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa writing about faith, hope and love, says: *'They are like three sisters. Two of them are grown and the other is a small child. They go forward together hand in hand with the child hope in the middle. Looking at them it would seem that the bigger ones are pulling the child, but it is the other way around; it is the little girl who is pulling the two*

bigger ones. It is hope that pulls faith and love. Without hope everything would stop.'

We are all invited into a living hope! Read 1 Peter 1:3-9. We have hope in Jesus' salvation from sin, and freedom from fear of punishment, from guilt and shame. Hope in Jesus' resurrection, a certain fact of history. Hope of restoration and transformation – from death to life. Hope of a glorious future, read Titus 2:13.

Bishop Leslie Newbiggin wrote, *'The horizon for the Christian is "He shall come again" and "we look for the coming of the Lord." It can be tomorrow or any time, but that's the horizon. That horizon is for me fundamental, and that's what makes it possible to be hopeful and therefore to find life meaningful.'*

Nicky Gumbel said: *The origin of hope is 'the God of hope'. The reason for hope is Jesus. The source of hope in you is the Holy Spirit. This hope is not wishful thinking. It is rooted in what God has done for us and is doing in us. This hope is the driving force for our day-to-day living.*

We can live confidently in hope, read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. We can face down the 'troubles' of this life with confidence in the God who fixes all. We have the promise of God, read Hebrews 6:19. And hopeful people, live with joy, and are able to live grace-full and generous lives in response to God's love.

We can grow hope. Firstly, by looking up – look to God. Read Hebrews 12:1-3. Secondly by living for God, seeking holiness and getting ready for his return, read 1 John 3:2-3. And thirdly by joining in with God. Christians, as a default, are an optimistic people. We have a hope and it's the hope of the world – to be shared with the world. Read 1 Peter 3:15.

And now, *'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.'*

Romans 15:13

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 Before Lent (Septuagesima). Almighty God, who alone can bring order to the unruly wills and passions of sinful humanity: give your people grace so to love what you command and to desire what you promise, that, among the many changes of this world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; 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: *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: Wed. 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.