

6th August, 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:

To God be the glory, great things He hath done,
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life our redemption to win,
And opened the life-gate that all may go in.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the earth hear His voice;
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the people rejoice;
Oh, come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory; great things He hath done.

Oh, perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
To every believer the promise of God;
The vilest offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Great things He hath taught us,
great things He hath done,
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
But purer, and higher, and greater will be
Our wonder, our transport when Jesus we see..

The Sermon by Rev. Howard Wright.

God is Holy. Read Psalm 77 and John 5:16-23

The Psalms are bluntly honest. This Psalm is particularly honest and raw.

The truth that led me to God was, that there is a God and he is good.

That God existed seemed logical for a number of reasons, including, it requires a real stretch of faith to believe in chance; that matter and comprehensible life, comes from no-where. But most significantly how do you explain Jesus, his teaching, miracles and most especially his death and resurrection – which are facts of history.

And, that God is good is plainly revealed in the Bible and most uniquely in Jesus.

So, why isn't it easy?

There are some answers to this question. For instance, the world and people are broken – sin has damaged us and the whole creation. But surely God could have made it easier.

The Psalm begins with a call to God: read verses 1 and 2.

At 'night' things can feel the most grim. The psalmist speaks as though for him, there is nowhere else to go, and that no one else would do! Read verses 3-6. The psalmist remembers that God is, and God is good. Things have been good, so why not now?

It feels like God has gone silent, read verses 7-9. Pete Grieg, author and church leader has written a book entitled God on mute – it is highly recommend, though annoyingly I haven't read it yet!

We can find ourselves asking, why God? Why me, or them, why me and not them? Why now?

The risk is that the psalmist will give up and quit. We have three choices:
To reject God. We may know he is there but refuse him his right to rule us
To ignore God, simply choosing not to believe in him.
Or we can trust and pursue God.

Like one of the soils in the parable of the sower, we can lose faith in the face of suffering and difficulty.

Jesus promises glory, but he also promises suffering, read Mark 10:29-31.

God is safe place to go with our complaints. Imagine an angry and despairing child beating their fists against their parent, and when in exhaustion they simply collapse on the parent in a heap, how then gentle and lovingly their parent holds them safe in a loving embrace – I imagine God to be like this with my complaints!

The psalmist is at risk of failing but he remembers the deeds and character of God.

Read verses 10-11 and 16-20. Here the Psalmist remembers the deeds of God and the specific moment of salvation as the people were lead out of their Egyptian captivity. In this dramatic act God saved and he will save his people. He might not do it our way or in our time but he will save us.

And in the dramatic sacrificial act of Christ upon the cross, God has saved and will save his people. He might not do it our way or in our time but he will save us. Read John 3:16.

Read verses 13-15. The psalmist remembers the character of God. He is holy, great and a rescuer of his people. He trustworthy and will lead us out – see verse 19 again. And not just through the waters – Red Sea, but through death – the cross and resurrection!

We can have confidence in God – even in the dark valley, the valley of the shadow of death, the shadow means there must be at least a glimmer of light. We can have confidence in the God who brings our salvation – Read Ephesians 1:18-21 & 3:20-21.

Many of us struggle with dark times, with suffering, our own or others, persistent pain, perhaps even persistent sins – but God is with us. Keep the Psalms close and seek to remember the deeds and character of God, his love demonstrated and salvation won through the cross.

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: Ninth Sunday after Trinity: Almighty God, who sent your Holy Spirit to be the life and light of your Church: open our hearts to the riches of your grace, that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in love and joy and peace; 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.16th August at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: 23rd August at 11am in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise TBA.
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays.
- COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.