

4th September, 2022

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 set out below.



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:

What gift of grace is Jesus my redeemer
There is no more for heaven now to give
He is my joy, my righteousness, and freedom
My steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
For my life is wholly bound to his
Oh how strange and divine, I can sing: all is mine!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

The night is dark but I am not forsaken
For by my side, the Saviour He will stay
I labour on in weakness and rejoicing
For in my need, His power is displayed

To this I hold, my Shepherd will defend me
Through the deepest valley He will lead
Oh the night has been won, and I shall overcome!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

No fate I dread, I know I am forgiven
The future sure, the price it has been paid

For Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon
And He was raised to overthrow the grave

To this I hold, my sin has been defeated
Jesus now and ever is my plea
Oh the chains are released, I can sing: I am free!

Yet not I, but through Christ in me

With every breath I long to follow Jesus
For He has said that He will bring me home
And day by day I know He will renew me
Until I stand with joy before the throne

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
All the glory evermore to Him
When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat:

Yet not I, but through Christ in me!

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Read 1 John 1:1-4 John and 1:1-14 – We live knowing Jesus

Sermon by Rev. Howard Wright.

We start a new series today: Live and Love. Making our way through 1 John we want to grow in our living in love for God and each other.

John's themes in his letter are truth, love, and life, repeated in an ever deepening spiral – know the truth, that is Jesus, and he will set you free, to live and love. (John 8:32)

That God is love, is one of the central verses of this letter. But we can get the sense that this is written by some kind old man sat in a comfortable study, looking out on the pretty Hampshire countryside. But this letter was written by John, he was by background a fisherman, used to hard work in dangerous conditions. He and his brother, James, were nicknamed 'Sons of Thunder', so not your typical 'needy' or 'insecure' types, yet they needed Jesus, and they found joy and sense of belonging in his presence.

John was writing in a time of great persecution including martyrdom. By now 10 of the first 11 genuine apostles of Jesus had likely been executed and John himself spent time in a penal colony exiled on a rocky island. And the threat to the church was not just physical. So extraordinary were the stories of Jesus – that surely they were too good to be true and so people tried to fix this with their own versions of 'truth'.

1. The whole truth and nothing but the truth...

What have you seen and touched today? You're pretty sure of its reality. And John was absolutely certain of his experience; he uses two different Greek words for having seen. '...we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at...' And he continues with '...our hands have touched...'.

After the resurrection the disciples were confused and thought Jesus might be a ghost, so Jesus invites them to touch him and feel that he was solid and he sat and ate with them. 'The life appeared; we have seen it...'

Jesus is so extraordinary, people began to suggest it was too good to be true. Either he was a physical creation – a human with superpowers, or he was not really human but some otherworldly supernatural being.

Greek culture, like today, though somewhat slower than our modern broadband speeds, (think dial-up!), allowed for the spread of ideas, and people could gain popularity, becoming celebrities, claiming a special knowledge.

Today we face a barrage of information. Much is good and helpful but we also have fake-news, reality TV that isn't real, and politicians who've made untruths the new normal. Jesus claimed to be 'the way and the truth and the life,' ... and added that no-one could get to the Father except through him (John 14:6). It's was a shocking claim then, as it is now, but we're a bit numb to scandalous claims today. But if this is true, it's really very important!

There is no doubt that a human-being called Jesus, known as the Christ, existed. There were many eye-witnesses, and overwhelming written evidence. He lived the most extraordinary life, experienced the most appalling death but returned to utterly-real physical life and is still at work, offering life and bringing joy.

2. A wonderful life...

In the now ancient but classic movie, *It's A Wonderful Life*, James Stewart's suicidal character is taken back through his life revealing the impact he has had for good so many people. He saved his brother's life, and numerous other individuals and, indeed, a whole town through his kindness. He concedes that he has had a wonderful life.

John here points to Jesus' wonderful life that has bought hope to all creation – just hear that again, 'hope to all creation.' The world is broken and needs fixing – it was made good but life has been broken – lives are being broken today – but because of Jesus there is hope.

This extraordinary God, Jesus, comes and lives among us. 'The Word became human, one of us, and lived with us.' (John 1:14). A wonderful life among us, John writes in his Gospel, 'Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all humanity.'

Similarly, Paul writes to the Colossian Christians, proclaiming Jesus, Col 1:16 -17.

The hope Jesus gives is for life, the life for which we were made, a life in company with God forever. This is our hope, and this hope is made possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus. It's no wonder that people struggled to believe – that God has come and rescued us. But it's not too good to be true; it is too good to turn down!

3. And Too Good Not to Share...

John was an eye witness to the reality of Jesus now. He couldn't hold it in, it was too good not to share. That there was an opportunity to mix with the creator and sustainer of the universe – this is Good News (that is: 'Gospel').

There is joy in sharing – 'complete' joy. Both joy for John and his hearers/readers and today, joy for us.

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: Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray and to give more than either we desire or deserve: pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask but through the merits and mediation 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: *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 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. 21st September at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: 28th September in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise for Harvest, Sunday, 2nd October, 3pm – 4.30pm
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays. COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.