

15th February, 2026

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.**

Hymn:

Man of sorrows Lamb of God
By His own betrayed
The sin of man and wrath of God
Has been on Jesus laid

Silent as He stood accused
Beaten mocked and scorned
Bowing to the Father's will
He took a crown of thorns

Oh that rugged cross my salvation
Where Your love poured out over
me

Now my soul cries out hallelujah
Praise and honour unto Thee

Sent of heaven God's own Son
To purchase and redeem
And reconcile the very ones

Who nailed Him to that tree

Oh that rugged cross my salvation
Where Your love poured out over
me

Now my soul cries out hallelujah
Praise and honour unto Thee

See the stone is rolled away
Behold the empty tomb
Hallelujah God be praised
He's risen from the grave

Oh that rugged cross my salvation
Where Your love poured out over
me

Now my soul cries out hallelujah
Praise and honour unto Thee
Praise and honour unto Thee.

The Sermon by Val Lucas

Read Revelation 14:1-13 and John 15:1-8 – The King's People

Despite the impression at the end of revelation 13 of Satan and the antichrist gaining ground, Revelation 14 shows who is really triumphant, powerful, and in total control. As has been stated before revelation contains nothing new for Christians and this chapter is no exception but it does contain some wonderful imagery. We see a scene of many Christians singing, angels appearing and giving messages and the whole earth being judged. The blood seeping out from the wine press looks like it belongs to a horror movie but its necessary contrast between good and evil.

The opening scene depicts Jesus standing on Mount Zion accompanied by 144,000 followers who have his name and his father's name written on their foreheads.

Christians are not marked in the same way the followers of Satan are. There is no number stamped on their foreheads or hands but this chapter talks of a name. It is a name that separates Christians from the followers of Satan's 666.

So what mark do the faithful followers in this scene have that identifies who they belong too? Many would suggest that it should be a cross, a fish or a dove as all of these are symbols that convey to others a belonging to the Christian faith. But no, there is no physical or visual mark symbol, written on their forehead or hands of the Christians. Instead it is a name or a spiritual seal. We see a person unmarked but whose personal perfume is that of holiness. A body that shines of the holy spirit and speaks of a close relationship with Jesus. It is person who exuberates the gifts of the Holy spirit and whose actions are of good works to all. We see in the vision a crowd of perfect people who have been set apart by God and protected.

God doesn't need a mark or a brand name to recognise those who belong to him. He knows the names of all those that have been saved. As we read in Isaiah 43.1 I have called you by name you are mine. This was repeated last week in the baptism service, I have called you by name you are mine. A declaration of divine ownership, of unconditional love and a covenant commitment.

As it says in Matthew 7.16 we will recognise Christians by their fruit.

The vision speaks of 144,000 followers who all have the spiritual seal.

This number also appeared in Revelation 7 and is widely interpreted as being symbolic and should not be taken literally. Let's remind ourselves of where this symbolism comes from, 12 tribes of Israel, 12 apostles and 100 that denotes in the bible a lot of people. Put that together 12 x12 x100 and we get the perfect number of 144,000. It really just means a lot of people! 144,000 is in itself a big crowd when you think Wembley stadium holds 90,000. Big church festival attracts max of 40,000. Just keep thinking big numbers and be overwhelmed to know that God

knows everyone of us by name. I even forget the names of my own family members!

In Revelation 13 the beast said he can make war and overcome God's people, the presence of a big crowd of Christians in Chapter 14 shows that Satan cannot and will not overcome. The followers of God have been there all along in Revelation and their numbers haven't changed or diminished.

It is interesting to read that the 144,000 all sing a new song before the throne, a song that only they can learn. This signifies the unique relationship and victory that believers have in Christ. "We are told in Revelation that No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth", It's a song that reflects the joy and triumph found in Jesus. This joy and triumph grows and changes every day therefore new songs burst forth regularly. This passage reminds me of when a gathering of Christians begin singing in tongues, in Perfect harmony. My Mum, who was with me was overwhelmed and she said it was like nothing she had heard before, like listening to angels.

New songs reflect a spiritual growth and a deepening of our relationship with God. The concept of singing a "new song" is relevant to believers today. Psalm 96 calls us to sing a new song as a response to God's love, salvation and daily mercies. It is important for worship as it allows for different generations of believers and cultures to express their faith and love of God in a language and style that they feel comfortable in.

During the singing of the new song, we are introduced to the angels.

The first angel proclaims the gospel to every nation, tribe, language, and people. "Fear God and give Him glory. This is the only place in the New Testament where we see angels preaching the Gospel. The great commission still belongs to us and we mustn't think that at the last minute this angel is going to do all our work for us. This is an exceptional event, the angel is in a position to gain the whole world's attention. It is the last chance to turn from Satan and accept God before the final reaping of the earth.

The third angel warns of the dire consequences for those who are not saved. If you worship the beast and have received its mark then eternal torment awaits you. You will drink the wine of God's wrath, there will be torment with fire and sulphur and there will be no rest day or night. This is a call to us all to examine our hearts and ensure that our allegiance is to God alone. Some have suggested this is a picture of negative encouragement to Christians, to endure persecution patiently and remain faithful to the end as no one wants to live for eternity in a furnace. But if you have been called and named by God he will help you to endure all things by providing supernatural strength and comfort. He assures us we will never be separated from his love.

Another voice from heaven confirms this with blessings for those who die from persecution, the glorious dead who will live and reign with God forever. This would be a great comfort to those Christians that John was writing too and for all Christians today that are being persecuted. Their faith and good works will follow them into heaven where they will rest from their toils and their faith will not be forgotten. Their life and death will live on to influence and encourage all Christians who come after them. Godly leadership lasts more than a life time. It is a great encouragement to all of us who are going through trials and persecution. God does not put fear into our hearts but encourages us to be steadfast in times of trial, focused on what rest and reward awaits us in eternity.

Finally, the vision turns to judgement day. The Son of Man wears a gold victory crown, the one of thorns is gone. He holds a sickle and Divine judgement begins. He gathers all those that belong to him, all those who have been called and named, all those who have the spiritual seal. The vision shows another angel gathering the wicked for judgement and into the wine press they go. The chapter concludes with the sobering image of the blood of the sinful running out of the wine press as a river 180 miles long and about 1½ metres high.

This vivid picture of judgment was the inspiration for *The Battle Hymn of the Republic: Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.*

Sunday before Lent (Quinquagesima) Almighty Father, whose Son was revealed in majesty before he suffered death upon the cross: give us grace to perceive his glory, that we may be strengthened to suffer with him and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory; 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.**

At the Church of the Good Shepherd:

- Tea and Chat and Bowls: February 18th and March 18th at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: February 25th at 10.30am in Church Hall.
- The Community Cupboard, 2:45pm every Thursday in Church.