

Easter Sunday – 12 April 2020

The paper-version Service



For now, we cannot meet in the building – but the church is still open!

Happy Easter

The Weekly Service Sheet: All of our services are on-line www.goodshepherdfourmarks.org.uk but we're producing this weekly sheet which captures our Sunday service for those who can't access internet.

If you know of others who'd like to receive this, or you'd rather not receive them yourselves; or if you find yourself isolated and not able to get neighbours, friends or family to help, then ring Howard, 01420 563344.

To Begin: Enjoy the Service: Grab a Bible, if safe, perhaps light a candle, find a comfortable place and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin.

Hallelujah, Christ is Risen – He is Risen indeed, Hallelujah!

Opening Prayer: Father God, thank you that you welcome us and love us, wherever we share in this service today. Thank you that we can come as we are and you receive us with grace, and so we offer ourselves to you, both our failures and our joys. We receive your forgiveness and offer our thanks and worship. As we read the Bible today, help us to hear your voice and respond to your love, your encouragements and your commands. Amen

Read: John 20.1-18

RISEN (A summary of Howard's sermon from Easter Day): Such strange times for Jesus' disciples. Everything in their life had been on hold – for 3yrs with Jesus. Now all has gone, Jesus is dead! They are not sure what the future holds but there is no way back to the old life (though

Peter makes a try at this – and attempts a return to fishing in John 21). And yet there is a rumour, a hope, a glimmer of light in the dawn of this 'first day of the week'; perhaps the first day of a something new in history.

Such strange times for us. Our lives are now on hold, in lockdown and isolation. The old world seems to have gone; vanished. We are not sure what the future holds, and it seems increasingly like we can't go back. Is there any hope for us – any new dawn. As our Bible reading begins '...it was still dark.' And it's still dark for us.

- Jesus understands darkness. The darkness that many feel. It turned dark at the cross and Jesus had spent the previous dark night wrestling with fear and being tormented by the very ones he'd come to save.

- Jesus understands breathlessness – one of the key issues with Covid-19. Crucifixion is regarded as one of the most horrific ways to die, it causes its victims to fight agonisingly for breath until the moment of exhaustion extinguishes life.

- And Jesus understands loss, he wept at Lazarus' tomb, and the Father understands losing a beloved child: '...God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.' John 3:16.

'Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark...' It is still dark, but we are not alone in this.



We want to go back to where we came from – but God wants to take us on to something better. Do you remember our Abraham series where we quoted from Hebrews 11 about the ancient saints: 'If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country – a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.'

Key to Abraham's walk with God is that he keeps stepping forwards toward God. The Father waits for us, with open arms, longing for us all to return to him wholeheartedly. Let's walk forwards with the God who is with us, whatever the future holds knowing that God understands.

This time will make history – in 100 years' time if Jesus has not yet returned, children will study this in their schools the 2020 pandemic and the new world that emerged.

But nothing has so affected human history as the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ – it has influenced life, society and culture dramatically for good, in the past, in the present and will continue to do so as we live as Kingdom people.

At the first Easter, the disciples didn't know what was next, but God did. Even after the resurrection the disciples didn't know what was next, but God did – and it was sufficient that he told them: 'Receive the Holy Spirit – and I am with you even until the end of the age – now go make disciples. (John 20:21-22)

What is next for us? We don't know – but God does, God understands and invites us to trust him, to hold onto to him, through our own and our world's darkness. To trust him and hold onto him through our own pain and the suffering of others. He says to us: 'Receive the Holy Spirit – and I am with you even until the end of the age – now go, make disciples.' (John 20:21-22 and Matthew 28:19-20)

I want to encourage you to keep reading the Bible, don't ignore the news, but be careful to balance it with the truth of God's Word. Keep praying – speak honestly to God – the Psalms do – express your hurts,

your pain, your fear and anger, along with your hope and joy in knowing God has got this.

There is hope with God. He is the one who takes the darkest moment in human history, the slaughter of the one true good and innocent man, who is God, and turns it into the best news we can hear – there is life and hope today. There is more than just the world we see, there are glimpses of heaven today, and the certainty of forever with God in his Kingdom tomorrow.



And be ready. Conversations have already arisen from our families and communities about future, hope and God. A time is coming when there will even more opportunity to share – the reason for the hope we have (1 Peter 3:15). We've been preparing for this – but in any case, however inadequate we feel, Jesus says: Receive the Holy Spirit – and I am with you forever: Now, go make disciples!

Prayers: I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. (1 Timothy 2:1-2 NIV)

Pray for the day ahead and its tasks

Pray for the nations

Pray for organisations

Pray for individuals, for neighbours, for family and friends

Pray for the Church

Pray for peace

A prayer for all those affected by coronavirus: Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy. Sustain and support the anxious, be with those who care for the sick, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may find comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. 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, COGS, 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:

Our Staff, Ministry Leaders and PCC are all working from home and are keeping up to date using on-line technology. Do contact us if you have questions/concerns starting with Howard on 01420 563344.

