

Sunday 21 June 2020

The paper-version Service



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

All of our services are online www.goodshepherdfourmarks.org.uk but this weekly sheet captures our Sunday service for those without internet.

To Begin: Find 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 or read; or even sing, the modern song from this Sunday's Service set out below.

Opening Prayer: God of love, thank you that you welcome us into your family. We are not worthy to be called your children, and we confess our failure to you. Thank you that you forgive us, and that through Jesus you offer us new life and begin to transform us by your Holy Spirit. Help us to respond to you today, become more like you, living to your praise and glory, loving you, loving our neighbour, and inviting others into your love. **Amen**



Song:

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear

And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

*My chains are gone, I've been set free
My God, my Saviour has ransomed me*

*And like a flood His mercy rains
Unending love, Amazing grace*

The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures

My chains...

The Earth shall soon dissolve like snow
The sun forbear to shine
But God, Who called me here below
Will be forever mine.

Read: Ephesians 4:17-32

Living like God (a summary of the talk given by Howard Wright):

Happy Father's Day! Families have values and habits they pick-up off each other. I first moved away from home at 15 but still hear my dad in the expressions that come out of my mouth. Helen and the children hear it and respond with the same words I can recall my own mum saying when I was younger: "you sound just like your father"!

Paul for the first three chapters of Ephesians has written passionately about the glory of God in Christ and the most amazing gift God has graciously shared with us.

Paul continues through chapter 4 to write about the new standards expected in God's family – what he is saying is, take on the family likeness. Be like your Father.

How about someone saying, not, 'You sound just like your father', but, 'You sound just like God'!

Paul begins this section (17-19) with a warning, 'don't be like the Gentiles'.

Ironically, he is writing mostly to Gentiles, but he is making the point that whatever they were, they are not that now. As he has been at pains to point out, they are God's children, his family, clan, and race – Abraham's descendants.

Whatever we might feel we are, or others might designate us as, I am in fact, firstly, a citizen of the Kingdom of God.

Paul is quite incisive in his assessment of those outside God's family. Hebrews 4:12 tells us, *'For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.'* And the words here in Ephesians are cutting.

Those outside of God have mistaken thinking – if Jesus is the truth, then to live without him, is to live in the darkness of ignorance. There will be elements of truth and light, as God in his grace reveals himself hoping to draw all people in, but ultimately, 'wisdom' such as we claim, 'is', as Jesus said, *'proved right by all her children.'* (Matthew 11:19)

And the children, or outcome, of the wisdom outside of God is the pursuit of love, joy and peace without the satisfaction of God, in other words a constant dis-ease of the soul, which many attempt to cure with the pursuit of pleasure, thrill and stuff.

Paul continues from v.20; that this is not what the children of God have learnt! Children of God are children of His wisdom. Those taking on the

family likeness of their heavenly Father.



So, Paul starts with, put off the old way, renew your thinking. Put on the family style, live to the family values, or in other words dress and be like God: (v23-24) *'You were taught... to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.'* In other words, as chapter 5 begins, *'Be imitators of God...'*

Now, he moves on to specifics of what this style and values are. We are to be careful with anger, not steal but work for a living so that you can share. We are to: speak well of others to build them up, not grieve the Holy Spirit and, to get rid of bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, and malice. Instead we are to be kind, compassionate, forgiving others – as God forgave you!

Now we might want to follow God's example of holiness and righteousness this week, but we will fail if we just think it is a question of turning up and it will all be ok. We will have to take off the old habits, they may be comfortable and even pleasant in a way, but the old must

go for the new clothes to be able to fit.

'Take up your cross and follow me' says Jesus (Matthew 16:24) – this will not be comfortable.

We read, *'You were taught... to be made new in the attitude of the minds...'* (v22-23)

Living this family life, begins with a heart orientated to God, what do we want in our hearts? What do we long for – search your heart and you will find we were made to know God and live in company with him? *'Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.'* said Augustine.

We might fill the ache with pleasure, thrill, or material stuff, but it will not be satisfied except for the presence of God and his Spirit.

And it continues with our minds controlled by God's Spirit – made new. It is not enough to go with how we feel – this risks anger, bitterness, hurtful words and wishing ill on others. We are to examine our thoughts and behaviours and to become more like our heavenly Father – living in *'his good, pleasing, and perfect will'*!

How are we going to do this, this week?

We need God's mind. Knowing the mind of Christ, means feeding ourselves more on God's word, than the values of our age fed to us

through the media! We need to load our minds with good things, God's perspective – his Word.

And we need accountability to each other. Our small groups can help – speaking the truth in love, challenging us about attitudes,

behaviours, encouraging us to grow in Christ.

Finally, we need to be praying, for knowledge of God's love for ourselves and all God's people. That we might be just like our heavenly Father.

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



Collect for Today: Lord, you have taught us that all our doings without love are nothing worth: send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love, the true bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whoever lives is counted dead before you. Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake, 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, 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: If you know of others who'd like to receive this, or you'd rather not receive it; or if you find yourself isolated and not able to get neighbours, friends or family to help, then ring Howard, 01420 563344.