

# Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> July 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](http://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:**

My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame  
But wholly trust in Jesus' name

*Christ alone, Cornerstone  
Weak made strong  
in the Saviour's love  
Through the storm  
He is Lord, Lord of all*

When darkness seems to hide His  
face

I rest on His unchanging grace  
In every high and stormy gale  
My anchor holds within the veil

*Christ alone...*

When He shall come with trumpet  
sound  
Oh, may I then in Him be found  
Dressed in His righteousness alone  
Faultless, stand before the throne

*Christ alone...*

**Read:** Ephesians 5:21-33

***Living under Christ*** (a summary of the talk given by Howard Wright)

Paul continues with the theme of new standards for this new community and family, of taking on the family likeness and being imitators of God. And in this passage and following, we read about how this applies to relationships, starting here with wives and husbands – though we will see it applies to us all.

My experience of the word submit, is not positive. It takes me to childhood and watching wrestling on TV and play fighting with others, where the loser, blurts out ‘I submit!’ Obviously, this is not a good way to look at this passage!

Submission in our age tends to suggest domination by one party and the oppression of the other. And in our broken world, this has led, among other abuses, to the domination of men over what they have seen, as *their* women.

So, what does God mean by having this in His Word to us? God would not speak words through Paul that contradict the words and actions of Jesus, so how are we to understand these words? Paul is not anti-liberty, nor anti-women, as some would present him – and not least because God is not anti-liberty either. It is to the shame of the Church that we have used the Word of God to

oppress others, whether because of gender or race, which is totally the opposite of God’s plan for us. God’s Spirit is freedom, freedom to be the people we were made to be

So, let us dig deeper to try to understand this passage. It is important to note that the context of this passage is, us taking on the likeness of Christ. This chapter 5 begins, ‘Be imitators of God.’

What is God like? We must look at Jesus and, in this passage, (vs.25-27) we read how Christ loves the church and gives himself for her to make her holy and beautiful.

As we have highlighted already in this series, Ephesians, echoes the whole Bible and revelation of creation in declaring Jesus as supreme King and God, but also, as the very highest example of selfless love. This same theme is put beautifully in Philippians 2. *‘Christ Jesus: ‘Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself*



*nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!’ (vs.5-9)*

So, this submission to each other, and the command for a wife to submit to a husband is not about domineering or rule but, as in chapter 4, about humility, gentleness, patience, and love. (v.2)

Chapter 4 spoke about the unity in diversity and here in the example of marriage the same theme continues – husband and wife are seen as interdependent, complimentary to each other, neither more important than the other, neither more valuable than the other, and neither in power, authority or control over the other – but they are different.

The men, and particularly husbands, are challenged at their likely point of failure, about their abuse of physical and legal power, like Jesus they are to kneel to wash feet in humble leadership and be willing to sacrifice their very lives, in order to love and bless their wives. There is no domination, arrogant pride or selfish ambition in Christ.

Women, and wives in particular, are challenged to faithfully trust and receive the care, not keep looking out for better options.

It is important to state that trust and ‘submitting’ to this care can only come if the partner has proved trustworthy. If you are reading this and are in a situation where someone is abusing your trust, I would encourage you to seek help.

This passage is radical for its time and treats women as equals. In Roman times, women, had no status and few, if any, rights. There is no excuse for domination by either sex, quite the opposite. Both are called to submit and to serve and be about the work of making each other more beautiful, more Christlike, more holy.

This passage is about marriage, but even more so about the relationship of Christ and the church and, therefore, in fact, about how all our human relationships should be: making each other more beautiful. We call the work a person does making a house or garden beautiful, a labour of love. How much more beautiful a labour of love helping each other to be even more Christlike!

So, for those married, strengthen the commitment to each other and love and serve. For all of us, during this continuing strange times, and as we work toward whatever post-Coronavirus church will look like, let us love one another and seek as a labour of love to make each more beautiful and Christlike.

**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 4<sup>th</sup> after Trinity:** O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that with you as our ruler and guide we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not our hold on things eternal; grant this, heavenly Father, for our Lord 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.

The Church is open for those who would like to use the space for private prayer. Clear instructions are displayed on how to make use of the church safely.

We cannot yet meet for services, but we will keep you updated as new information becomes available.

