

16th April, 2023

The paper-version Service



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love



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.**

Song:

Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!
our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!
who did once upon the cross,
Alleluia!
suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia!

Hymns of praise then let us sing,
Alleluia!
unto Christ, our heavenly King,
Alleluia!
who endured the cross and grave,
Alleluia!
sinners to redeem and save.
Alleluia!

But the pains which he endured,
Alleluia!
our salvation have procured;
Alleluia!
now above the sky he's King,
Alleluia!
where the angels ever sing. Alleluia!

Sing we to our God above, Alleluia!
praise eternal as his love; Alleluia!
praise him, all ye heavenly host,
Alleluia!
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Alleluia!

Sermon by Martin Beckwith: Christ the Sending Lord.

It's a seminal moment today: the end of the series we've been following on Sundays and in the small groups since Christmas. Take a look back: We looked at the 'visions and values' considering and responding to some of the basic doctrines/teaching about being a Christian. 'Why does the (and our) church exist'? Then we expanded and applied that teaching to our own lives with some memorable teaching in 'growing deeper and larger' – 'Hitting the ground kneeling." With diet, exercise, prayer and Bible study.

And around Easter we considered the death and resurrection of Jesus, which underpins and enables it all and from which emanates everything the church does. I think it's been an excellent series. And now we're at the end – wrapping it up. Christ died and is raised and now the last act: Christ **sending** / commissioning to go and represent him, to be ambassadors for him in our sphere of influence. In other words, 'Go ... to serve the Lord.' We call it a 'dismissal', but it could be a weekly re-commissioning To leave here ready to face the week as his representatives and in his strength. It's the second time in four weeks we've read the Great Commission from Matthew.

So you could think, 'So what are we doing here? Let's get on with it'. That end of term feeling. But before we go it's important to know why we're here. Meeting together is the essential flip side of being 'sent out'. I'll suggest four reasons :-

To worship God – exactly like the 11 disciples who worshipped the risen Jesus. Worship = reverence of God. A conscious act assisted by eloquent and meaningful words from the songs.

To hear and absorb the teaching. There's a reason why on website the sermon is important. Learn, re-learn scriptural truth – doctrine – and apply it to our lives and living. Paul told Timothy to "Study to show yourself approved, a workman who needs not be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

To 'proclaim the Lord's death'. Publically and deliberately and consistently to remember the events of Easter; it's a pivotal point of God's plan of salvation we've thought especially about recently.

To be with each other; like minded people. To enjoy each others' company. Christian shorthand = Fellowship. It demonstrates being the parts of the body, the church. Howard saying 25 people are involved in each Sunday service. Let alone maintain the building/shift the paperwork/run

small groups and activities in the week. Different parts of body and part of the 'great cloud of witnesses (Hebrews) which helps us run with perseverance the race before us.

But there's always one supreme difference between a church meeting and of a staff/business/social activity. We'll have reminded ourselves of the 'New birth into a living hope through the resurrection, into an inheritance which can never perish. The end result of faith, the salvation of our souls.' Every week we consider a few different angles from which it can be viewed. Applied its reality to our experience / situation – our 'frontlines' whatever and wherever they are.

The overall effect of meeting together is to re-charge and re-fill us spiritually, to apply our living hope in the context of personal circumstances.

In a few minutes time we'll 'Go' out onto our frontlines for another week as Christ's representatives to represent Christ and promote his kingdom wisely and genuinely.

I've watched and listened to people employed by this church and others and why they represent Christ effectively – often a great personal sacrifice. Because they have his heart of compassion for people and not indifference or judgemental.

A representative needs also to be consistent in behaviour and attitude and clear in the message they transmit. At some cost we may sow seed of gospel, 'on the path' on the shallow soil, among the choking thorns (young people) as well as the good soil. Especially nowadays we may turn the corner and feel acidic cultural winds blasting into our faces. And we re-charge and re-provision by meeting with risen Christ collectively and individually.

Don't think there's nothing you can do, perhaps through age/infirmity/disability. When I returned from university, there were the two elderly ladies who were infirm and lead simple lives. But they prayed. And now I appreciate them more than I ever did. Only in heaven will fully appreciate service and ministry.

So there it is. Our series is complete. Its aim was to deepen our understanding/desire to know and serve Christ. What difference it really makes is between us and him. May he not be disappointed. *We rest on thee.*

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: *Second Sunday of Easter: Almighty Father, you have given your only Son to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification: grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness that we may always serve you in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ 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: *Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new: transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory; through 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.*

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. 19th April at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: 26th April at 11am in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise TBA.
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays.
- COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.