

# 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2024

## 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.**

**Song:**

Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
fill me with life anew,  
that I may love the way you love,  
and do what you would do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
until my heart is pure,  
until my will is one with yours,  
to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
so shall I never die,  
but live with you the perfect life  
for all eternity.

## The Sermon by Matt Senior

### Read Psalm 92 and John 1:9-14 – Praise the Lord

Last week Howard called Psalms songbook for the ancient people of God. Psalm 92 is titled, 'A Psalm. A song. For the Sabbath Day.' Much like today's worship songs, it encourages us to praise.

It praises God for who he is – "How great are your works, how profound your thoughts", it also talks a few times about enemies perishing – not something that comes up so often in today's worship playlists, perhaps a reflection that the psalms are written with a pre-Jesus understanding of the character of God. So, I want to focus on the first 2 or 3 verses and especially the exhortation that we 'praise the Lord.'

Searching the bible for the words 'praise the Lord' returned 185 results, and another 104 results for the words, 'worship the Lord.' For me, the definitions of praise and worship have more than enough overlap to use them interchangeably.

Our psalm says praise is 'good to do.' An understatement - it's vital and a consequence of recognising who God is. Praise and worship are our highest calling. John Piper wrote that "Mission exists because worship doesn't." Long after the need for mission, we will still praise.

Indeed, when Jesus was asked which is the greatest commandment. He replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind [Praise]...And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. [Mission]"

Praise is not an activity we can tick off, once a week on a Sunday morning. Verse 2 makes clear it's an all-day thing. In fact it's an all-the-time thing. If you're thinking that this is an impossible standard to meet then I have good news but also a warning: You are always praising, whether you are intending to or not.

Singing is of course not the only way to praise. Our praise can take many forms, but the bible has numerous references to singing to God. Why would God want us to sing to him? We have a God of extravagant love and we are invited to love him in extravagant ways as well.

Consider flowers, whenever we give flowers to people, we are throwing our money away. As soon as they are cut, they are dying and will soon be thrown away. Wouldn't something more permanent be better? When we give flowers we are saying "you are worth me wasting my money on." It's the same with singing. The singing is fleeting; only be enjoyed in the moment. We could be doing something useful but we are choosing to "waste" our time singing for God's pleasure.

When we worship God, we are doing it for his pleasure, but it can't *just* be beautiful. The song *The Heart of Worship* was written by Matt Redman after his

church had put a pause on all sung music because it was recognised that the music, rather than God, had become the thing that drew the people in. And, as the church re-discovered it's core purpose, Matt Redman wrote,

*“When the music fades, all is stripped away and I simply come.  
Longing just to bring something that's of worth, that will bless your heart  
I'll bring you more than a song, for a song in itself is not what you have required  
You search much deeper within, through the way things appear  
You're looking into my heart  
I'm coming back to the heart of worship and it's all about you, Jesus”*

It's about the heart. A bunch of flowers is a beautiful gift, but meaningless if there's no heart behind it – it's the same with a song.

We are praising all the time, singing or not. Whatever we devote our minds, our energy, our time, and our resources to, becomes the object of our praise. It could be we praise our work, we could praise our bank balance, we could praise our spouse, our family, our hobbies. If these become our top priorities, we are giving them praise, deliberately or not. Too easily we become the object of our praise.

The words 'praise' and 'worship' are interchangeable, but we can add 'service' in as well. All that we spend our time doing can be done in praise, or service, of God. We may just need to change our motivations for doing them and our desires for who gets the glory.

I read an article about Olympic athletes giving glory to God in their competing. It brought to mind the famous quote from the movie Chariots of Fire, where the runner Eric Liddell says, “I believe that God made me for a purpose...but he also made me fast. And when I run I feel his pleasure.” We can praise God in all our actions and we are allowed to enjoy it. CS Lewis wrote that, “In commanding us to glorify him, God is inviting us to enjoy him.” But God will also enjoy us.

I recently heard a Christian Speaker answer a question by starting with the words, “one of the things God loves about me is...” I was struck by this. We are God's children. He knows us more intimately than we know ourselves.

Those of us who have children of our own, will be able to talk about what it is we love about our children. We might have experienced the joy of seeing our children do something that comes naturally to them, that they are gifted at, or gives them great delight. We may even say to them, this is something you were born to do.

God sees us in this way as well. If God gave us a talent or a flair for something, it is going to give him pleasure to see us do it. And if we are doing it for God's glory, giving him thanks and praise as we do so, then what a beautiful act of praise that will be.

**13th Sunday after Trinity:** Almighty God, who called your Church to bear witness that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself: help us to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may be drawn to you; through him who was lifted up on the cross, 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.*

**Blessing** to be declared over yourselves, St Andrews and 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).

### **At the Church of the Good Shepherd**

- Tea and Chat: September 18<sup>th</sup> at 2pm in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Bowls: September 18<sup>th</sup> at 2pm in the Church.
- Coffee and Questions: August 28<sup>th</sup> and September 25<sup>th</sup> at 10.30am in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise: 3pm Sunday, TBA
- The Community Cupboard, 2:45pm every Thursday in Church.

### **For Further information:**

This paper and all parish details are on the website at <https://www.pariahofmedsteadandfourmarks.co.uk>