

30th April, 2023

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:

O perfect love, O perfect sacrifice,
Fountain of life poured out for me.
What heights and depths of
heaven's mercy,
The faithfulness that I believe.
And to whom shall I run?
And in whom shall I hide?
Only You hold the truth I desire.
O perfect love, my prayer shall ever
be, to be found in Jesus.

O perfect love, O perfect mystery,
You were condemned, but I go free.
What truth to know that I can rest
upon:
Your perfect love has covered me.
And what can this heart know?

And what can this heart tell?
But of grace that has rescued me.
O perfect love, My prayer shall ever
be, to be found in Jesus.

O perfect love, forever I shall sing
Of heaven's gates flung wide for
me.
Where fear of death and tears of
hopelessness
Are swallowed up in victory.
And what praise shall be sung
Still to the Holy One;
To the Saviour, Redeemer and King.
O perfect love, my song will ever
be: 'I am found in Jesus.'



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

The Sermon by Rev. Howard Wright.

This week (28th April – 1st May) in church is the flower festival in the build-up to Charles' coronation as King. (We will have 1 Service Sunday, with an all age 11am service). I wonder if Jesus had been delivering his sermon on the mount, as a sermon in the flower festival, whether he would have used flowers as an illustration, as well as salt and light.

Salt is a flavouring and preservative, but aside from this has little use. In fact, once spoilt it is useless, other than as a weed-restricting paving material – to be 'trampled on.'

Salt, as a flavouring, brings out the flavour of other foods. And as a preservative it has been widely used, especially before refrigeration to stop foods going off.

In regard to being the salt of the earth, Jesus' challenge is that we add flavour in life, his flavour, and that as we do this, we stop the world going bad.

Light reveals things as they are; it offers direction and assures us of safety. Light can be attractive or harsh, depending upon our starting point! Should we wish to hide conceal ourselves, our attitudes and behaviour, light is very unwelcome, but without light we cannot flourish – life on earth depends on light!

In a similar way to salt, regarding light, Jesus is challenging us to be a force for good. Revealing the truth, the safe way to travel, giving glory to God by our 'good deeds'.

Flowers can be used in a similar illustrative way. Their colour, shape and scent is entirely designed to enable pollination, or capture nutrients, and therefore bring forth more life. We are to be people who, in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, bring forth life!

So, how are we to live?

Jesus has already given hints in the introduction to his sermon, the beatitudes. Read again Matthew 5:3-12, and notice how Jesus is encouraging us to live differently, as people who will bring flavour, light and colour to life.

And Jesus in the rest of his sermon – if you are able to, read the rest of the verses until the end of chapter 7 – gives us attitudes and behaviours to develop or avoid.

We are encouraged to develop attitudes and behaviours which reflect the character and nature of God. God is love and seeks the best for us. He wants us to have life in all its fulness and he, like any good parent, wants the very best for us, but will allow us to choose!

God's best for us, might be, and is at times, different to what those aside from him, might think, but it is this 'best' that brings flavour, light and colour, to our lives and the lives of others around us. Anything else risks a bland, dark, drab, existence.

Simone Weil wrote: 'Imaginary evil is romantic and varied; real evil is gloomy, monotonous, barren, boring. Imaginary good is boring; real good is always new, marvellous, intoxicating.'

In the rest of the sermon (as throughout the whole Bible), we are encouraged in practical ways to:

- Love others, and seek good for them, even our enemies. (See among others: Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 4:8; and 1 John 3:18)
- Be faithful in relationships, honouring others, sticking to our word. (See among others: Ecclesiastes 5:4-7 and James 5:12)
- Be humble, not self-seeking, assessing yourself not judging others. (See among others: Romans 12:3 and Philippians 2:3-11)
- Be generous in gifts and forgiveness. (See among others: 2 Corinthians 9:6-7; Colossians 3:13-14; Ephesians 4:2-3)
- Seek the riches of the Kingdom, not worldly wealth or glory. (See among others: Proverbs 23:5; Ephesians 3:16-21; Colossians 3:2; and 1 Timothy 6:17-18)
- Trust God, as an antidote to worry. (See among others: Isaiah 26:3 & 41:10; and Philippians 4:6-7 & 19)
- Pursue God and build on the foundation of Jesus. (See among others: Jeremiah 29:13; Romans 2:7-8; and 1 Corinthians 3:11-15)

So, what will our response be? Many of us have fallen at the first hurdle and we need to ask God for forgiveness and receive his grace. Many of us lack the strength to change, but God, by the power of his Holy Spirit, offers his resurrection strength to us. And now, each day we need to keep in step with Jesus, entering the 'narrow gate' and living flavoursome, light filled, colourful lives to the glory of God.

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: Fourth Sunday of Easter: Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life: raise us, who trust in him, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, that we may seek those things which are above, where he 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. 17th May at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: 24th May at 11am in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise TBA.
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays.
- COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.