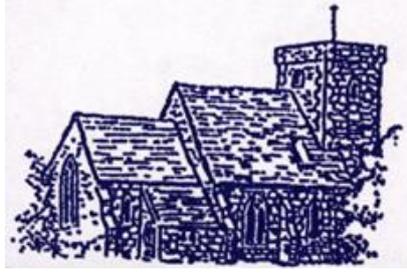


## St Peter's Church



**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

**Welcome to a completely new way of communicating on a Sunday!**

### **Opening Prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ  
You entered our world  
taking on our humanity,  
identifying yourself totally with us  
For your great love

I thank you

You give us the privilege of sharing in the work of your kingdom  
offering our service in turn  
giving of ourselves without reserve  
putting our own interests second  
to the needs of those around us

For your great love  
I thank you

Amen

### **Confession**

Now is the time to turn to God, and to say sorry for the things we do wrong.  
For the ways we have forgotten about living for Jesus, and being ready for His return  
we are truly sorry

**In your mercy, Lord, forgive me.**

For the actions that have angered You,  
we are truly sorry

**In your mercy, Lord, forgive me.**

For the words that have wounded You,  
we are truly sorry

**In your mercy, Lord, forgive me.**

For the thoughts that have betrayed You,  
we are truly sorry

**In your mercy, Lord, forgive me.**

The Bible declares: Happy are those whose sins are forgiven,  
whose wrongs have been pardoned.

To them the Lord says: I will teach you the way you should go

**Be glad and rejoice because of what the Lord has done.**

**Amen**

O God, forgive us for my lack of love,  
and in your mercy make me  
what you would have me be,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen

## Reading

Read Psalm 23

### Comment from Ross **Shepherd and Friend**

Depth and strength underlie the simplicity of this justly famous Psalm. Its peace is not escape; its contentment is not complacency: there is readiness to face deep darkness and imminent attack, and the wonderful climax describes and reveals a love which moves to no material goal but the Lord himself.

It's remarkable to read and believe that **the Lord** is *my Shepherd*. The God of creation, the one who seeks, and saves is concerned with me – it is a pledged relationship of rich intimacy and everything else in the Psalm flows from that. Here David has used the most comprehensive and intimate metaphor yet seen in the Psalm. Usually he refers to the Lord as 'King' or 'deliverer'. Here the shepherd lives with his flock and is everything to it: physician, protector and guide.

This is the shepherd who leads us along the right paths though at times it may not feel like that! The dark valley of verse 4 is as truly one of his 'right paths' as are the green pastures - a fact that should take some of the sting out of the ordeals that life throws at us. And for David His presence overcomes the worst thing that remains: *the fear*. Modern versions of the Bible either have here deepest darkness or darkest valley, *Shadow of death* is the literal meaning of the single Hebrew word. Here, beautifully the more personal you is brought in v4 replacing the more distant 'He'. So, the Shepherd is no longer ahead to lead but alongside us to comfort and escort us. The Psalm finishes with a wonderful sense of confidence and security – the Lord is with us in all of life and even through death itself- the future is assured – 'I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever'.

It's impossible as a Christian to read this Psalm without thinking of the words of Jesus in John chapter 10 'I am the Good Shepherd'. The Lord who David spoke of became one of us and proved his love for the sheep by literally and voluntarily laying down his life for us. His death conquers death – his perfect love casts out fear.

So, echoing the words of St Paul we can say 'Neither death nor life... will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord'

## Reading

Read John 10: 11

**I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep**

Jesus is insisting here that his messianic mission was not going to be like that of the imposters who had come before him. Their messiahship had taken the lives of men and women. Jesus messiahship was going to give life to people, but only at the expense of his own.

There are three things he insists about his death:  
It was a **loving** death- he is willing to die for us

It was a **planned** death- He was in control of his own destiny not at the mercy of forces beyond his control. His death was a voluntary act of sacrifice. His life was not lost, but deliberately given

It was a **saving** death - Jesus speaks of a wolf coming to attack the sheep - the Shepherd gives his life to save theirs.

In many ways our word 'good' doesn't quite catch the full meaning of the word John uses. It can sound a bit moralistic, a bit cold and hard. The word John uses can also mean 'beautiful'. Its about the sheer attractiveness of what, as the shepherd he was doing.

When he calls, people want to come. When they realise, he has died for them, they want to even more.

## **Philippians**

### *Introduction*

Philippians is a joyful letter, but Paul wrote it from a prison cell with a sentence of death hanging over him which is what makes its all the more remarkable. Here is a man not contemplating life from the comfort of an armchair or a university common room but from a dank dark depressing prison cell under the control of Roman soldiers. Paul addresses some of the key questions which always face us but at certain times more pressingly than others. When things seem to go wrong – very wrong where is God in it all? What perspective as a Christian do, I bring to this? Paul actually writes in verse 12 of chapter 1 '*Now want you to know, brothers and sisters that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel*' What – sitting in a Roman jail!? Apparently so. For Paul nothing lies outside of the sovereign providential care of the Lord he served. So, he addresses questions such as: What does our Lord promise to us?

What will we find him to be in the hour of need?

How can we enjoy his benefits, and will we find them sufficient?

This most gracious and unassuming of Paul's letters is surely a tract for our times.

There are *three* key themes to this letter –

The **first** is the vital importance of unity in the church- the importance of a shared mission see verse 27.

The **second** is of a church under attack – there are parties and divisions beginning to reveal themselves hence those great words in verse 4 of chapter 2 '*value others above yourselves not looking to your own interests but each to the interests of others*'.

The **third** major theme is the expected return of our Lord Jesus Christ Philippians is in line with the emphasis of the whole New Testament (in contrast to much Christianity in the west) on the importance of this delightful expectation.

These three themes intertwine to make up the letter, but the uniting factor is not any one of them – but the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the fully divine Lord. To his people he is the coming one, the Lord of the future; but he is also the Jesus of the past – of the cross. He is the present Lord Jesus transforming his people now. He is their joy. In all circumstances he gives confidence and security for he is the Lord of circumstances, and when proved is found sufficient.

### **Special Prayer for Today**

#### **Special Prayer for Lent 5**

Almighty God you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners;  
Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise;  
that, among the swift and varied changes of the world ,  
our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God now and forever .  
Amen

## **Prayer**

Please spend this time in private prayer.

### **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

### **Song - words to contemplate or to play if you can access them.**

*Bless the Lord, O my Soul  
O my soul  
Worship His holy name  
Sing like never before  
O my soul  
I'll worship Your holy name.*

The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning  
It's time to sing Your song again  
Whatever may pass,  
and whatever lies before me  
Let me be singing when the evening comes

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, .....*

You're rich in love, and You're slow to anger  
Your name is great, and Your heart is kind  
For all Your goodness I will keep on singing  
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find

*Bless the Lord, O my soul.....*

And on that day when my strength is failing  
The end draws near and my time has come  
Still my soul will sing Your praise unending  
Ten thousand years and then forevermore

*Bless the Lord, O my soul  
O my soul  
Worship His holy name  
Sing like never before  
O my soul  
I'll worship Your holy name*

## **A Final Prayer**

Lord God

we rejoice in your greatness and power  
your gentleness and love,  
your mercy and justice.

Enable us by your Spirit  
to honour you in our thoughts,  
and words and actions,  
and to serve you in every aspect of our lives;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen