

Order of Service 26th June 2022, Holy Communion

Good Will Hunting

Welcome

Hello and welcome to Hearsall at Home for 26th June 2022. Our service today is called Good Will Hunting, as we ponder the topic of how to live our lives as brightly and beautifully as we can. What is the secret of a good life? I don't give a definitive answer on that, and maybe that's something to ponder over the coming days. We also include holy communion.

Call to Worship

51 As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. 52 And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; 53 but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. 54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" 55 But Jesus turned and rebuked them. 56 Then he and his disciples went to another village.

57 As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." 58 Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

59 He said to another man, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." 60 Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

61 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family." 62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

Luke 9: 51 - 62

Jesus brings a radical call to leave behind all that holds us back, and to embrace the liberated life of the kingdom. We sing *Come with me, come wander...*

Hymn (BPW 333) **Come with me, Come Wander**

Come with me, come wonder, come welcome the world
Where strangers might smile or where stones may be hurled;
Come leave what you cling to, lay down what you clutch
And find, with hands empty, that hearts can hold much.

Chorus

Sing hey for the carpenter leaving his tools!
Sing hey for the Pharisees leaving their rules!
Sing hey for the fishermen leaving their nets!
Sing hey for the people who leave their regrets!

Come walk in my company, come sleep by my side,
Come savour a lifestyle with nothing to hide;
Come sit at my table and eat with my friends,
Discovering that love which the world never ends.

Chorus

Come share in my laughter, come close to my fears,
Come find yourself washed with the kiss of my tears;
Come stand close at hand while I suffer and die
And find in three days how I never will lie.

Chorus

Come leave your possessions, come share out your treasure,
Come give and receive without method or measure;
Come loose every bond that's resisting the Spirit,
Enabling the Earth to be yours to inherit.

Chorus

Prayers of Praise and The Lord's Prayer

Great God of all life and truth, we praise and bless your holy name.
For creating all that exists in the unfathomable beauty of earth and sky;
for making people to reflect your likeness;
for the inspiration and guidance of your word;
for meeting us in the person of Jesus;
for offering us salvation through his life, death and resurrection;
for the outpouring of your Holy Spirit who always woos us to a broader vision and a deeper life;
for walking and talking with us through every day;
for meeting us too in silent contemplation and glorious music;
for the joys and challenges of our life on earth;
and for the sure promises of the life to come.
We praise and bless your holy name. 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.

Offering

For all your good gifts we praise your holy name. Take our own humble gifts and use them to make your kingdom come in our world. Amen.

We sing a song of praise together.

Song (WT 255) **Let Everything that has Breath**

Chorus

Let everything that,

Everything that, everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Let everything that,

Everything that, everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Verse 1

Praise You in the morning,

Praise You in the evening,

Praise You when I'm young

And when I'm old.

Praise You when I'm laughing,

Praise You when I'm grieving,

Praise You every season of the soul.

Bridge 1

If we could see

How much You're worth,

Your power, Your might,

Your endless love,

Then surely we would

Never cease to praise.

Chorus

Verse 2

Praise You in the heavens,

Joining with the angels,

Praising You forever and a day.

Praise You on the earth now,

Joining with creation,

Calling all the nations to Your praise.

Bridge 2

If they could see
How much You're worth,
Your power, Your might,
Your endless love,
Then surely we would
Never cease to praise.

Chorus x 2

*Let everything that,
Everything that, everything that has breath praise the Lord.
Let everything that,
Everything that, everything that has breath praise the Lord.*

Our prayers of intercession are led by Derek Noel.

Prayers of Intercession

Loving and caring God, it is to You we turn when all seems chaos and disorder. You bare us up in times of worry and heartbreak.

So, we bring to You so many who at this time are faced with difficult and life changing conditions.

We pray for those in leadership in national and political life; that they may seek the greatest good for those facing hardship and even poverty.

We pray for church leaders, that guided by the Holy Spirit, they may speak words of wisdom and love for all.

We pray for peace. We remember those whose lives are torn apart by conflict and a desire to control and dominate.

On this day, we pray especially for refugees in so many places — for The Ukraine, for Myanmar, for Congo, Somalia, Palestine and so many other places.

We pray for those whose lives are spoilt by ill health and we pray for all who bring comfort in times of distress and give care and help in times of pain and hardship.

Finally, we pray for Christ's Church. May it be a means of change - changing lives, changing attitudes, and changing outlook. May we be changed and challenging people, showing Christ's mind and hands in a needy world.

Prayer to say together

God of the courage that comes from the heart; God of the journey that starts from within; we pray that each small step we take today will lead us along a path of love and peace.

AMEN

Many thanks Derek for those prayers. We hear now two Bible readings from 2 Kings and from Galatians.

Bible Readings

2 Kings 2: 1 - 2, 6 - 14

Elijah taken up to heaven

2 When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ² Elijah said to Elisha, 'Stay here; the LORD has sent me to Bethel.'

But Elisha said, 'As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you.' So they went down to Bethel.

⁶ Then Elijah said to him, 'Stay here; the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.'

And he replied, 'As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you.' So the two of them walked on.

⁷ Fifty men from the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. ⁸ Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

⁹ When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?'

'Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,' Elisha replied.

¹⁰ 'You have asked a difficult thing,' Elijah said, 'yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours – otherwise, it will not.'

¹¹ As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. ¹² Elisha saw this and cried out, 'My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!' And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his garment and tore it in two.

¹³ Elisha then picked up Elijah's cloak that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴ He took the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and struck the water with it. 'Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?' he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over.

Galatians 5: 1, 13 - 25

Freedom in Christ

5 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Life by the Spirit

¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh^[a]; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'^[b] ¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

¹⁶ So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever^[c] you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish

ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit is love... Let's ask again for the Spirit to fall upon us, and make our lives suitable for his service as we sing, Spirit of the Living God...

Song (WT 380) **Spirit of the Living God**

Spirit of the living God,
Fall afresh on me;
Spirit of the living God,
Fall afresh on me.
Melt me, mould me,
Fill me, use me.
Spirit of the living God,
Fall afresh on me.

REPEAT

Sermon

Good Will Hunting

Imagine if what holds us back from achieving great things is not a lack of resources, not a dearth of talent, not even an unclear vision, but simply this: a fear of failure. Or imagine if what holds us back from loving is not a lack of love in our hearts, nor a lack of desire for the beloved, not the smallness of our knowledge or skill, but a fear of our love not being returned.

Imagine if what stops us from embracing the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control - is not

that we don't know how, but rather that we fear to abandon ourselves to the love of God.

As some waggish preacher once said, faith is a four-letter word spelt R I S K. To have faith we have to face the possibility of failure. We even have to know that, in our limited human resources we are very likely to fail. We fail precisely so that something or someone bigger than our small selves might succeed.

The 1990s film *Good Will Hunting* starring Matt Damon and Robin Williams, gives me my title today. Can we allow good will to flower within our hearts and intentions? Can we hunt down a sense of positive intention in ourselves, and in others, and take the risk of creating something beautiful?

In the film, we meet a brilliant but grossly underachieving young man called Will Hunting, played by Matt Damon. He is a maths prodigy, but has work cleaning the corridors at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has the potential to become a name mentioned in the same sentence as Albert Einstein, but positions himself in an unthreatening job; and yet a job that brings him so close to the field of his potentially stratospheric achievement. He flirts with amazing success, but won't take the risk of walking a path that might make that happen.

He is loved by an English young woman, Skylar, but pushes her away. He has friends but gets into fist fights and is arrested for assaulting a police officer. He avoids jail by agreeing to work with a maths professor and attend therapy.

He goes through several therapists who are unable to help this acerbic young man who rolls himself into a spiky ball like a hedgehog at the first sign of emotional vulnerability. But, one therapist, Sean, played by Robin Williams, manages to get through.

Will's predicament is encapsulated in the scene where, as his girlfriend Skylar leaves on a plane, she looks for him at the airport, but he has not come to see her off. Instead, he sits in a park and watches the plane from a safe distance. His watchword seems to be *close by but far away*. He stands at the gate of love, fame and success, but prevents himself from going in.

Through Sean, he has learnt that the search for perfection in others and in ourselves is vain and, in Will's case, is shutting him out from love and life. He won't love Skylar because he can't face the reality that she will turn out to be ordinary and flawed.

But Sean helps him to see that love and life are stifled by a demand for guaranteed perfection. We live and we love by letting go, and experiencing another person in the real messy world, by letting them be who they truly are in all their idiosyncrasies and frailty. Sean's romantic advice is that no one is perfect, but a couple can be perfect for each other. For Sean, the imperfections **are** the good stuff!

Therapist and client, it turns out, both experienced serious physical abuse as children. After exploring this in many ways, Sean finally gets through to Will, and, in a breakthrough moment, says again and again and again to him: It's not your fault...

They embrace. Therapist, Sean, has been affected by his client, Will, and sets off on his own journey of discovery. And Will? He gets in the car his friends have given him and sets off to see about a girl. He means Sklyar, and he is borrowing a line from Sean. It's how Sean described his decision to give up his tickets for a major baseball game to spend time with the woman who would become his wife. The film ends with us hoping that at last Will has found within him a willingness to love another human being as she really is. There is some good in Will Hunting.

The choice to be a person of love costs us everything. But only by risking everything can we truly love.

* * *

We began our service today with a gospel reading. It included this shocking exchange:

He [Jesus] said to another man: "Follow me."

But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

In Jewish culture, to bury a dead parent was a solemn duty that trumped even saying one's prayers. In pragmatic terms, a true Christian would, I am sure, show proper

respect to the dead. That noted, what the text is doing here is to jolt its readers into a realisation that a commitment to the kingdom of God costs absolutely everything. To thrive in Jesus' terms is to commit.

The same jolt is delivered as Jesus explains that his followers may have to sleep on the open road; and may not have time to say farewell to their family. Jesus sounds a loud alarm - there's something big going on in the kingdom, something primal, something that is more important than all the regular expectations of ordinary life.

The nature of that commitment is seen in the first part of the gospel reading. James and John want to mimic Elijah and call down fire from heaven on the Samaritan villages that did not welcome Jesus. Jesus rebukes them for this - the startling reality of the kingdom of God remains open to all, and is not interested in lobbing incendiary bombs on opponents. Everyone matters.

In our Old Testament reading, Elisha is keen to remain with his master, Elijah, as the latter nears the end of his time on earth. Feel Elisha's love for his master. Sense his hunger for something more. He wants a double portion of Elijah's spirit. And he gets that, as he sees Elijah taken up in the chariot of fire led by horses of fire and knows his wish has been granted.

He has his double portion of Elijah's spirit. His desire for something more has been rewarded.

Many centuries later Paul wrote to the Galatians, *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and don't let yourselves be burdened by again by a yoke of slavery.*

The yoke of slavery he meant was an adherence to the Jewish law as the route to salvation. Some were insisting that Gentile Christian men should be circumcised.

Jesus had insisted the kingdom of God was more vital even than family duty. Paul teases out a similar idea. We don't need circumcision, nor any other religious sign, what we need is the freedom *to serve one another in love.*

What Jesus calls 'proclaiming the kingdom of God' maps onto 'walking by the Spirit' in Paul's theology. It's so simple, so broad, so universal, that people miss it quite easily.

To walk by the Spirit is to live by an ethos of love, even for those the world teaches us to call enemies. If we are aggressive to others, then we risk being destroyed by that aggression ourselves. This aggression is what Paul means by the *acts of the flesh*. The phrase might sound quaintly salacious but he spells out what he means:

- **sexual immorality**, which destroys the trust of intimate love;
- **impurity** and **debauchery**, which destroy the sense of self-respect;
- **idolatry** and **witchcraft** which destroy a proper respect for God and the holiness of all he has made;
- **hatred**, which destroys the sense of love in our own hearts and makes us less than our best selves;
- **dissensions**, **factions** and **envy**, which express that hatred in human relations, and so break down peace and love and trust and harmony;
- **drunkenness** and **orgies**, which disrespect our own bodies and the bodies of others.

But to proclaim the kingdom of God;

to live the Jesus way;

to be led by the Spirit...

is to have the courage to shine, to be brilliant, to be our very best... To live by the Spirit leads to harmonious inclusive qualities growing: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

The Spirit of God is the breath of God. Everything that lives has his breath within it.

To live by the Spirit is to live in innate solidarity with every creature God has made.

To live by the Spirit is to take decisions that protect life on this planet. To live by the Spirit is to accept the humanity of everyone in every nation. To live by Spirit is to oppose all that divides us into warring factions.

* * *

A couple of weeks ago I watched the England football team playing against Germany

in Munich. The England team are ranked the fifth best team in the world by FIFA. Yet for seventy minutes they played in a timid and disoriented way, and deserved to be losing 1-0, as they were.

But then a couple of substitutions were made. On came Jack Grealish and then Jarrod Bowen. Bowen, and especially Grealish injected belief and passion into the whole team. Suddenly they believed. Suddenly they had faith in who they were. Suddenly they took risks, and, in the 88th minute scored a now-deserved equaliser through Harry Kane's penalty, a noteworthy 50th goal for his nation.

Now, I know you don't come to me for football commentary, but I offer this as an illustration of daring to be our best. Do we as a church, do we in our personal lives, do we at work, play in timidity and without a faith in who we really are? Can we, like Will Hunting, sit on the side-lines of success, too fearful to commit to what will really allow us to shine?

Can we allow the Spirit of God to take us to that new kingdom-of-God reality that is more vital than any particular human custom? Can we stop worrying about what others might think, or how it might all go wrong?

And, thinking of our little church, is it time to believe, to be filled with love, to have the courage of our convictions and to prove the power of Christ by daring to take some fresh action which might fail, which probably will fail, because what have we got to offer as a ragged bunch of Baptists, but which might just be able to succeed because all the reasons we have for not expecting it to succeed enable us to trust in the one reason why it might just succeed - that the Kingdom of God is within us, and among us, and around us and that his Spirit bids us shine and do brilliant, unifying, serving, beautiful things in the invincible power of love?

So, it takes courage to live the Christian life. Let's pray for that courage and receive God's love as we sing, O Lord, your tenderness...

Song (WT 327) O Lord, your Tenderness

Verse

O Lord, Your tenderness
Melting all my bitterness,
O Lord, I receive Your love.
O Lord, Your loveliness,
Changing all my ugliness,
O Lord, I receive Your love.

Chorus

*O Lord, I receive Your love,
O Lord, I receive Your love.*

Holy Communion

The table of the Lord is spread. It is for those who will come and see in broken bread and poured out wine symbols of his life shed for us on the cross and raised again on the third day. The risen Christ is present among his people and it is here that we meet him. It is for those who know him a little and long to know him more. We invite all who are seeking him and all who are weary of their sin and doubt to come and share in the feast.

Prayer of Preparation

Loving Lord, we come to this table not trusting in our own merits, but relying on your great mercy and forgiveness. We acknowledge our sin before you. In our thoughts, words and deeds; in our omissions and in our carelessness; we have erred in your sight. We are truly sorry and seek for your forgiveness through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, whose blood was shed to bring us mercy. Amen.

Prayers for the Fellowship

Loving Lord, we pray for our life as a church. Grant us both the vision we need and the courage we lack to be a living communal witness of your glorious salvation. Shape us into a people of love and equip us to share your gospel in word and deed, near and far. Amen.

Gospel Words

God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, that everyone who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life.

I am that living bread which has come down from heaven; if anyone eats this bread, they shall live forever. Moreover, the bread which I give is my own flesh; I give it for the life of the world.

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of Sonship and Daughterhood. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father'. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Words of Institution

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Loving Lord Jesus, for this bread and wine we give you our thanks. A loaf speaks of the unity of a family gathered round a table; of the fertility of the earth; of the skills of farmers and bakers; and of provision for our bodies. Wine speaks of glad hearts; fruitful vines; the skills of vineyard growers and winemakers; and of people brought together in celebration. And now they speak, too, of your body broken to make us whole; of your blood spilt to make us clean; of the oneness of the church in earth and in heaven; and of the celebration in glory at the end of all time. For bread and for wine and for all they mean to us today, we give you our thanks.

Breaking and Sharing of Bread

Jesus said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." We share bread together in communion with him and with one another.

Sharing the Cup

In the same way after supper Jesus took the cup.

He said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

We drink wine together.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Loving Lord, we thank you for meeting with us as we have shared bread and wine together.

We praise and bless you for your mercy when we were sinners;

for enfolding us in your body when we were alone;

and for calling us to live like shining stars of light, when we had become jaded.

United, we choose a life of loving fellowship;

forgiven, we rise to a life of worship;

sent out, we embrace a life of gospel-sharing in word and deed.

Take us this day and every day and make us living sacrifices and joyful witnesses of your everlasting, all-embracing love. Amen.

We conclude our worship as we sing, O breath of love...

Hymn (BPW 293) **O Breath of Love**

O breath of love, come breathe within us,

Renewing thought and will and heart;

Come, love of Christ, afresh to win us,

Revive your Church in every part!

O wind of God, come bend us, break us

Till humbly we confess our need;

Then, in your tenderness remake us,

Revive, restore – for this we plead.

O breath of life, come sweeping through us,

Revive your church with life and power;

O breath of life, come, cleanse, renew us

And fit your Church to meet this hour.

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;

And the love of God;

And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

Be with us all, evermore.

Amen

Sung Blessing

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you

Wherever he may send you;

May he guide you through the wilderness;

Protect you through the storm;

May he bring you home rejoicing

At the wonders he has shown you;

May he bring you home rejoicing

Once again into our doors.