

Order of Service 19<sup>th</sup> September 2021

***The Wise Life***

Welcome

Hello, and welcome to Hearsall at Home for 19th September 2021. Our service today includes Holy Communion, so if you'd like to share in that please find some bread and wine or juice. Our theme today is, *The Wise Life* and we think about what Scripture says about how to live well.

Call to Worship

Blessed is the one

who does not walk in step with the wicked  
or stand in the way that sinners take  
or sit in the company of mockers,

2 but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,  
and who meditates on his law day and night.

3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither –  
whatever they do prospers.

4 Not so the wicked!

They are like chaff  
that the wind blows away.

5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

6 For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

Psalm 1

We draw strength from rejoicing in God's goodness. Let's sing, *Come let us join our cheerful songs.*

Hymn (BPW 6) **Come let us join with Cheerful Songs**

1. Come, let us join our cheerful songs  
With angels round the throne;  
Ten thousand, thousand are their tongues,  
But all their joys are one.
2. "Worthy the Lamb that died," they cry,  
"To be exalted thus!"  
"Worthy the Lamb," our hearts reply,  
"For He was slain for us!"
3. Jesus is worthy to receive  
Honour and power divine;  
And blessings more than we can give  
Be, Lord, forever Thine.
4. Let all that dwell above the sky,  
And air and earth and seas,  
Combine to lift Thy glories high,  
And speak Thine endless praise!
5. The whole creation joins in one,  
To bless the sacred name  
Of Him who sits upon the throne,  
And to adore the Lamb.

Prayer of Adoration (quoting Song of Songs 4: 12 - 17)

You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride;  
you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain.  
Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates  
with choice fruits,  
with henna and nard,  
nard and saffron,  
calamus and cinnamon,  
with every kind of incense tree,

with myrrh and aloes  
and all the finest spices.  
You are a garden fountain,  
a well of flowing water  
streaming down from Lebanon.  
Awake, north wind,  
and come, south wind!  
Blow on my garden,  
that its fragrance may spread everywhere.  
Let my beloved come into his garden  
and taste its choice fruits.

Lord of love I belong to you.  
Let me be as a garden for you to enjoy.  
Let my beloved come into his garden  
and taste its choice fruits.  
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer (traditional version)

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.

We sing together a song celebrating the love of Christ for us all...

Song (WT 65) **Come On and Celebrate**

Come on and celebrate  
His gift of love, we will celebrate  
The Son of God who loved us  
And gave us life.  
We'll shout Your praise, O King,  
You give us joy nothing else can bring,  
We'll give to You our offering  
In celebration praise.

Come on and celebrate, celebrate,  
Celebrate and sing,  
Celebrate and sing to our King.  
Come on and celebrate, celebrate,  
Celebrate and sing,  
Celebrate and sing to our King.

Offering

Lord, take our humble gifts and use them to express your generous heart. Amen.

We share our prayers of intercession followed by our Bible readings.

Prayers of Intercession Nick Leonard

O Lord, our God, source of all goodness and love, accept the fervent prayers of your people; in the multitude of your mercies look with compassion upon all who turn to you for help; for you are gracious and to you we give glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

We pray for your church around the world and in our local community. Give strength, resilience, and peace to all who turn to you. May you bless all your disciples with wisdom and may they know your will for them in each individual situation.

Almighty Father, whose will is to restore all things, govern the hearts and minds of those in authority, and bring the families of the nations, who may be divided and torn apart by the ravages of sin, to be subject to your just and gentle rule.

God of compassion, you hear the cries of all who are in trouble or distress; accept our prayers for those whose lives are affected by storms and flooding: strengthen them in their hour of need, grant them perseverance and courage to face the future, and be to them a firm foundation on which to build their lives.

We thank you for opening the hearts of many of those who are fleeing for their lives. Help us now to open our arms in welcome, and reach out our hands in support, that the desperate may find new hope, and lives torn apart be restored.

We hold before you those who are homeless and cold, especially as the weather gets wetter and colder. Draw near and comfort them in spirit, and bless those who work to provide them with shelter, food and friendship.

Gracious God, we pray for the work and service of all care homes and day centres for elderly and sick people, and for those carers who look after family and friends in their own home. We thank you for the many charity organisations that raise money and provide supportive services to help. We pray for all finding their life painful, lonely or uncertain, especially those who are ill or vulnerable. Help them to sense your comfort in times of need and bless their families and carers. Show us the best way to help those who suffer, without being intrusive but without simply turning away from their pain either

Dear Lord, we wonder at the world which you have created. Show us how we can be used to look after the earth which you have made for us. May we become trusted custodians, working towards restoring the damage which has already been done, to restore it to its original glory.

God of love, show us our place in this world as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth, for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.

Enlighten those who possess power and money, that they may avoid the sin of indifference, that they may love the common good, advance the weak, and care

for this world in which we live. The poor and the earth are crying out. O Lord, seize us with your power and light, help us to protect all life, to prepare for a better future, for the coming of your Kingdom of justice, peace, love and beauty.

Lastly, we pray for your church here at Hearsall and the local community it serves. We pray that you will guide and inspire the church and its leadership to be the loving community you would have us be.

We pray for those who are on the church's prayer chain and for those who have been added to the prayer book.

We pray particularly for those who are known to us as individuals. Whom we think of now.

(Pause)

Everlasting God, we pray for ourselves. As we go from this church today to start the week ahead, we ask that in all we do, we may walk more closely with you at our side, safe in the knowledge that your fatherly love and care knows no bounds.

Merciful father, all these petitions, requests, and concerns we lay before you, knowing that you will answer, where appropriate, with your power, healing and peace.

We ask all these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour who had died for us. Amen

### Bible Readings

#### **James 3:13 - 4:11**

##### *Two kinds of wisdom*

<sup>13</sup> Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. <sup>15</sup> Such 'wisdom' does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. <sup>16</sup> For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

<sup>17</sup> But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. <sup>18</sup> Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

*Submit yourselves to God*

<sup>4</sup> What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? <sup>2</sup> You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. <sup>3</sup> When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

<sup>4</sup> You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup> Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? <sup>6</sup> But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

'God opposes the proud  
but shows favour to the humble.'

<sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

<sup>11</sup> Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.

**Mark 9: 30 - 37**

*Jesus predicts his death a second time*

<sup>30</sup> They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, <sup>31</sup> because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill

him, and after three days he will rise.' <sup>32</sup> But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

<sup>33</sup> They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the road?' <sup>34</sup> But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

<sup>35</sup> Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, 'Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.'

<sup>36</sup> He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, <sup>37</sup> 'Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.'

And now may the words of my mouth and the thoughts of all of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

### Sermon

#### ***The Wise Life***

I watch my six-month-old granddaughter, Lauren, lying on her back in her crib. She smiles up at me and giggles when I pull a face. She seems so content. It's as if she knows at some deep level that she belongs...

She belongs in her crib...

She belongs in her family...

She belongs in the world...

Of course, many babies are less content. Thirty five years ago Lauren's dad used to wriggle about and was only really happy in his mother's arms, which made it hard for me to care for him. But at some level I believe he, too, knew he belonged in his family, and in this world.

Exceptional traumatic circumstances aside, this is just how things are.

We begin with a sense of belonging.

It's just how things are meant to be.



But then things begin to go awry. As a baby grows into a toddler, she starts to learn the rules of human society. In this human world, there is competition and struggle. Maybe she becomes aware of an older sibling who also demands mum's attention. Maybe she goes to nursery, and learns how to fight or negotiate for access to the best toys. And then she goes to school and learns more about the struggle for approval, about differences between people, about rewards and sanctions, about grading, exams and coursework.

Time moves on and she learns about interviews, careers and competition. She feels the need to make her mark on the world. Somewhere along the line, she has accepted that one person's success might mean another person's failure.

She becomes aware of her own accent, skin-colour, social status and level of physical attractiveness. She learns that society values women who look a certain way more highly than others. By the time she is an adult, she has learnt the power of her own sexuality and how to manipulate it. If she wants to belong fully in this world, she must play her hand carefully.

Of course, there is so much to celebrate when a young adult thrives in society, but there is also a psychological and spiritual loss involved. She has moved from belonging by instinct to belonging by social norms. Her sense of belonging was unconditional. Now a sense of belonging depends on her achievements, beauty, special connections and wealth. She has moved from a sense of being okay whatever might happen, into a sense of needing to struggle and work to be seen as okay. She has moved from blessedness to anxiety.

James' letter explores the unfortunate consequences of living this second way. He describes this way as 'friendship with the world'. Here, the word 'world' doesn't refer to the created order of nature and animals, but to the world as defined by the ideas of human society. The word for 'World' here could be translated as 'the System'.

Friendship with the world here means buying into the human world's systems, and James describes them in graphic detail. There's a false sort of wisdom that leads to envy, excessive competitiveness, selfish ambition, disorder and evil. James adds

covetous desires, quarrels, fights and even killings to his description of worldly wisdom - what we might call the way of the system.

Unfortunately, this is only too accurate, even today. A recent report states that 227 people are known to have been killed for protecting the earth's beautiful environment last year. Protestors frustrating the corporate ambitions of miners, loggers, oil-extractors and others have been murdered. For example, South African Fikile Ntshangase, 65, who was involved in a legal dispute over the extension of an opencast mine operated by Tendele Coal near Somkhele in KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa, was shot dead in her own living room.

James' description of the lethal habits of so-called worldly wisdom - the tenets of selfishness and greed ingrained in the world system - is certainly no exaggeration. Murder is only the final and ultimate expression of unbelonging which goes with the world's system. We belong; maybe you do not.

Fikile's daughter, Malungelo said her "mother's struggle lives on." She said: "To this day no arrests have been made in the investigation into my mother's murder. There has been no accountability. It seems to me that someone wants this mine expansion and the extraction to go ahead, **no matter the cost.**"

Well, I hope in Britain today things are less extreme. Our government hopes to see 2 million green jobs created by 2030. But even here, financial considerations can bully away environmental concerns. On a walk from Berkswell recently with two friends, we had to turn back because we came across high fences, officious signage and threatening cameras. Beautiful countryside we could previously walk freely across was now given over to HS2. It seems to me to be both sad and somewhat irrational that so much woodland is being destroyed to create a faster journey time from Birmingham to London, just when we have learned the values of remote working. Of course, we also have murders here in Britain, especially gangland murders of young people in our cities.

James' condemnation of worldly systems and worldly wisdom was illustrated in our gospel reading. Jesus has explained the severe, dark and challenging experience that awaits him in Jerusalem. But even as they make the journey there, the disciples

engage in a conversation about which one of them is the greatest. This seems unbelievably crass, almost as crass as drilling for more oil at a time when the climate crisis screams for a rapid, permanent, irreversible and complete switch to green energy. It's the crassness and craziness of putting short-term self-interest ahead of long-term shared well-being.

How does Jesus respond to the disciples' absurd dreams of personal greatness? First of all, he announces the inversion of the world's system of domination and control. Anyone who wants to be first, must be last, and be everyone's servant. Self-interest is not the way in Christ's kingdom.

And then he places a child, like my little granddaughter Lauren, among them. Whoever welcomes one of these little children welcomes me, he says. *Whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me; Father God.*

Whoever welcomes God, we might add, welcomes life.

In Jesus' day, childcare would have brought no financial rewards. It would have been women's work. Welcome a baby. Welcome a toddler. Welcome a child. Welcome someone who can give you no financial benefit. Welcome someone regardless of your business interests! Jesus points out a way of life beyond selfish grasping. Welcome someone who cannot possibly give you any commercial advantage!

At the same time, in a softer way, this baby, this toddler, this child, does bring a kind of advantage. Perhaps we feel, as we listen to them gurgling or chattering away, that instinctive sense of belonging I mentioned earlier. Can a baby - or even a puppy or a kitten - teach us wisdom?

James goes on to discuss real wisdom. It's pure - meaning free from self-interest. It loves peace - that is a sense of harmony and **belonging for all**. It naturally considers other people, is willing to be submissive - to allow that others may have a contribution to make. It's merciful, kind, sincere, and genuine. It creates peace, and therefore it harvests righteousness.

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.* As we sit by the child, Jesus places into our midst, we may not feel fear exactly, though perhaps we do indeed feel a kind of fear. There is certainly something in the emotional territory of fear...

Awe, wonder, delight, something beyond words.  
To welcome a child is actually to welcome Jesus.  
To welcome Jesus is to welcome Father God.  
To welcome God is to embrace all that lives in him.

Can it also be that, when we welcome the child, we are even welcoming ourselves?  
As we look into her infant eyes, the eyes of a little one so undeniably belonging to  
God's life, does the child within us also wake up, so that we know again that we also  
belong? May we be born all over again? Maybe this world of winners and losers,  
successes and failures, grows a little dimmer as we sense a certainty that God holds  
us as his beloved babies, forever belonging in his heart and his kingdom.

As we look around at others who may have troubled us, maybe this deeper truth of  
gratuitous belonging in God, leads us into purity, peace-making, gentleness, mercy,  
goodness, impartiality, inclusiveness, sincerity, simplicity, wholesome living and love.  
Maybe Jesus' lesson of the child, if we learn it wholeheartedly, can indeed make us  
truly wise.

Christ's wisdom is rooted in shared belonging and service. We choose to follow his  
way as we sing, *From heaven you came.*

### Song (WT 100) **From Heaven You Came**

Verse 1

From *heaven* You came, helpless babe,  
Entered our world, Your glory veiled.  
Not to be served but to serve  
And give Your life that we might live.

*Chorus*

*This is our God, the Servant King.  
He calls us now to follow Him;  
To bring our lives as a daily offering  
Of worship to the Servant King.*

Verse 2

There in the garden of tears,  
My heavy load He chose to bear;  
His heart with sorrow was torn,  
Yet not my will but Yours, He said.

*Chorus*

Verse 3

Come see His hands and His feet;  
The scars that speak of sacrifice.  
Hands that flung stars into space,  
To cruel nails surrendered.

*Chorus*

Verse 4

So let us learn how to serve,  
And in our lives enthrone Him.  
Each other's needs to prefer,  
For it is Christ we're serving.

*Chorus*

*This is our God, the Servant King.  
He calls us now to follow Him;  
To bring our lives as a daily offering  
Of worship to the Servant King.*

Holy Communion

Invitation to Communion

We gather at this table to celebrate life:  
the life of the God of the world, made flesh and blood in Jesus, embodied in us.  
We come to remember the body that was broken:  
the hands that touched the untouchable,  
healed the hurting,  
and did no violence;

the feet that got dusty along city streets and at the lake's shore;  
the arms that welcomed the stranger and embraced the outcast;  
the legs that entered homes and synagogues and danced at celebrations;  
the eyes that blazed against injustice, knew how to cry and saw the potential in everyone;  
the belly that shared table with unexpected people and shook with laughter;  
the lips that wove stories and painted pictures of a new community and a better world.

This blessed body that was broken, abused and rejected,  
we come to remember,  
for we are called to be the body of Christ.  
As you, Risen Christ remember our lives,  
so we remember you.  
And not only at this table,  
but in our life together  
may we embody your kingdom  
and remember your life in the world.

### Bible Verses

#### **Luke 14: 15 - 24:**

15 When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, 'Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.'

16 Jesus replied: 'A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. 17 At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, "Come, for everything is now ready."

18 'But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, "I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me."

19 'Another said, "I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me."

20 'Still another said, "I have just got married, so I can't come."

21 'The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame."

22 "'Sir," the servant said, "what you ordered has been done, but there is still room."

23 'Then the master told his servant, "Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. 24 I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"

### Prayer

Lord, we accept the invitation to your banquet.

We gather around your table.

We choose to live your life:

the abundant life of welcome to all;

the deep life of overflowing joy;

the inclusive life of radical welcome;

the joyous life that lasts forever...

Because of your grace we remember that we belong here:

at your table and in your heart;

in your world and in your glory;

in your church and in your family.

Praise you Lord. Amen.

### How the Lord's Supper came to be

#### **1 Corinthians 11: 23 - 26**

<sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, <sup>24</sup> 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." <sup>25</sup> 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." <sup>26</sup> For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

## Thanksgiving Prayer

O God, we give thanks for the bread and wine we have in our homes today;  
a timeless reminder of the flesh-and-blood life of Jesus:  
broken, rejected, yet unstoppable.

In Christ we see a life that could not be ended by death;  
a purpose that could not be silenced by the forces of violence;  
a desire deep within you for the transformation of the world.

And so, in a few moments, we will eat the bread and drink the wine.

We thank you for the acceptance and tenderness  
with which you have transformed our shame into dignity  
and loved us into life;  
we thank you for cherishing the potential in us  
and for calling us to be partners in your vision for this world.

In our communion together we call on your Spirit to come alongside us,  
so that together, in the company of your Spirit  
we may give ourselves afresh  
to the task of remembering you,  
of being the body of Christ,  
of living your life in this world. Amen.

## Sharing

We are about to share bread and wine together in our various houses. Let's pause  
and take a moment to think of each other and to pray that God's presence unites us  
in remembering him:

Lord, we remember one another, and in this time of communion we affirm our unity  
and celebrate the love that binds us always together in love. Amen.

It's time to share the bread. Please take it in your hands and break it now as I say:

*Jesus said, this is my body which is for you. Do this in memory of me.*

*One minute of silence as people share*

So let's share the bread together, and think of all our brothers and sisters sharing  
bread in homes around Coventry and beyond.



So now we share the wine or juice. Lift it up as I say,

*Lord Jesus, we drink from this cup which is the new covenant between you and humanity. We drink with glad and thankful hearts, for our sins are forgiven and you fill us once more with your Holy Spirit.*

Let's share the cup together.

*One minute of silence as people share*

After taking the bread and wine, we pray once more.

### Post Communion Prayer

We have taken bread and wine into our bodies.

Now may these hands be the hands of Christ in the world, may they do no violence.

May these eyes see those who are overlooked, may these ears listen to those who

are unheard; may these voices be raised for the voiceless, lest our songs of praise

be empty. May these feet take us where Christ leads, and may these hearts and

minds be open to your Spirit. Christ has remembered us. Let us remember Christ.

Amen.

Our closing songs celebrate the delight we find and the transformation we experience as we serve Christ out in the world at large.

### Song When Your Pure Light Shines (Prue/Sutcliffe)

When your pure light shines

so brightly in our world,

I see the colours change

from greyness into glory.

Our hearts, like coloured glass

that were so dark and dusty,

turn radiant and lovely

in the glory of your light.

*Chorus x 2*

*Shine within my heart!*

*Shine within your church!*

*Shine ever brighter in your world!*

The broken and the lonely  
are welcome in your church;  
the hungry ones are fed  
and migrants treated kindly;  
slaves at last are freed,  
the unemployed find work,  
and mourners relearn gladness  
in the family of God.

*Chorus x 2*

*Shine within my heart!*

*Shine within your church!*

*Shine ever brighter in your world!*

*Ending:*

*Shine ever brighter,*

*Shine ever brighter,*

*Shine ever brighter in your world.*

**Song (WT 495) **You Shall Go Out With Joy****

Verse

You shall go out with joy  
And be led forth with peace;  
The mountains and the hills  
Will break forth before you;  
There'll be shouts of joy  
And all the trees of the field  
Will clap, will clap, their hands!

*Chorus*

*And all the trees of the field will clap their hands;*

*The trees of the field will clap their hands;*

*The trees of the field will clap their hands;*

*While you go out with joy!*

Repeat Verse

*Chorus X 3*

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.