

The Good, The Bad And The Redeemed



Middlebie 18th February 2024

Order of Service

Middlebie 18th February 2024

Call to Worship	Perfected Worship
Hymn	CH4 352 O For A Thousand Tongues To Sing
Approach	Choices
Address	Halfway
Hymn	CH4 559 There Is A Redeemer
Readings	Psalm 25:1-10 1 Peter 3:18-22 Mark 1:9-15
Hymn	CH4 191 Do Not Be Afraid
Intercession	Wholehearted Lord we are your imperfect servants <i>May we serve with all our hearts</i>
Hymn	CH4 423 I Know That My Redeemer Lives
Sermon	The Good, The Bad And The Redeemed
Offering	Chances To Grow
Hymn	CH4 445 Alleluia! Sing To Jesus
Benediction	Redemption

Call to Worship Perfected Worship

Come let us gather before the Lord
The Lord who is perfect
Perfect love and perfect justice
Perfect truth and perfect light
Come let us gather before the Lord
And bring our worship
Imperfect in word and song
Imperfect in prayer and purpose
But perfected by his grace
And his presence in this place with us
Come let us worship the Lord

Hymn

CH4 352 O For A Thousand Tongues To Sing

O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer 's praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of His grace!

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life, and health, and peace.

He breaks the power of canceled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.

He speaks, and, listening to His voice,
New life the dead receive,
The mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
The humble poor believe.

Hear Him, ye deaf; Him praise, ye dumb,
Your loosened tongues employ;
Ye blind, behold your Savior come,
And leap, ye lame, for joy.

My gracious Master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim,
To spread through all the earth abroad
The honours of Thy name.

Approach

Choices

Eternal God for whom time is an open book
Who knows every fraction of every moment
Every instant of unfolding destiny
You have known us from our very beginnings
When huddled in caves we have fed our sick
Or when we have sharpened bone to kill our enemies
Here in this place we gather in praise
For the Father of humanity
Who knows our triumphs and our degradations
Who has seen our times of tribal madness
Yet offers hope that we may grow
We gather in praise of the father who loves us
Who has known us from our beginnings
Each of us known to you and precious
Watched as we stand and grow, as we stumble and fall
You have seen our acts of kindness and of harshness
You have heard our words of love and of hate
You have seen the choices we have made
And we know they haven't always been the right ones
You have offered us so much and we have turned away
You have offered the fruits of compassion
And we have hardened our hearts
You have offered us the blessings of peace
And we have marched to the drums of war
You have offered us a vision of humanity made one
And we have spurned our brothers and sisters in need
Father forgive us

Redeemed through the Cross of Calvary
We rejoice in your forgiveness
We ask you to guide our hearts and minds
To make the right choices
To be who we are meant to be

And to walk in the way of your Son

Address**Halfway**

We are creatures of darkness
We are creatures of light
Daughters of mid-day
Sons of the night
We have moments of madness
And times we are strong
Major and minor
The chords of our song

We are agents of nightmares
We are builders of dreams
We are swords of division
We are builders of teams
There are times we do do badly
There are times we do well
We are halfway to Heaven
We are halfway from Hell

Hymn

CH4 559 There Is A Redeemer

There is a redeemer,
Jesus, gods own son,
Precious lamb of god, messiah,
Holy one,
*Thank you oh my father,
For giving us your son,
And leaving your spirit,
til the work on earth is done.*

Jesus my redeemer,
Name above all names,
Precious lamb of god, messiah,
Oh, for sinners slain.

When I stand in glory,
I will see his face,
And there I'll serve my king forever,
In that holy place.

Readings

Psalm 25:1-10

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O LORD! Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way. All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

1 Peter 3:18-22

For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you--not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

Mark 1:9-15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming

the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

Hymn

CH4 191 Do Not Be Afraid

Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you.

I have called you by your name; you are mine.

When you walk through the waters I'll be with you,
you will never sink beneath the waves.

When the fire is burning all around you,
you will never be consumed by the flames.

When the fear of loneliness is looming,
then remember I am at your side.

When you dwell in the exile of the stranger,
remember you are precious in my eyes.

You are mine, O my child; I am your Father,
and I love you with a perfect love.

Intercession **Wholehearted**
Lord we are your imperfect servants
May we serve with all our hearts

Father God we live in an imperfect world
A world that knows suffering and pain
A world that knows hatred and war
A world that knows greed and poverty
A world that knows injustice and oppression
In this world you call us to bear witness to your love
Lord we are your imperfect servants

May we serve those who are hurting
Some we bring before you now

We bring before you those who are sick
Whether in mind or soul or body
We bring those who are broken
By stress or grief or loneliness
We bring those whose bodies fail them
Through the frailties of age
We bring those who have fallen prey
To the addictions life tempts them with
Where we can, may we bring your word
Lord we are your imperfect servants

May we serve in the name of peace
We bring before you the victims of conflict
Those caught up in wars that sunder families
Those hated for the colour of their skin
Those driven to our shores seeking refuge
Those who are abused. Sometimes in their homes
Father of all humanity
For whom all are brothers and sisters
Where we can may we seek peace

Lord we are your imperfect servants

May we serve the weak and the easily forgotten
We bring before you the victims of inequality
We bring the hungry in a world of banquets
We bring the homeless in a world of palaces
We bring the destitute in a world of robes of state
Where we can may we be a voice
A voice for the silenced

Lord we are your imperfect servants

May we, your Church, serve your justice
By caring for those who are hurting
By embracing those who are hated
By speaking for those on the margins

Lord we are your imperfect servants

Hymn

CH4 423 I Know That My Redeemer Lives

I know that my Redeemer lives;
Glory hallelujah
What joy and peace this sentence gives!
Glory hallelujah
Shout on! Shout on, we're gaining ground
Glory hallelujah
The dead's alive and the lost is found
Glory hallelujah

He lives to bless me with His love,
Glory hallelujah
He lives to plead for me above.
Glory hallelujah
He lives my hungry soul to feed,
Glory hallelujah
He lives to help in time of need.
Glory hallelujah

He lives, all glory to His Name!
Glory hallelujah
He lives, my Saviour, still the same.
Glory hallelujah
What joy the sweet assurance gives,
Glory hallelujah
I know that my Redeemer lives!
Glory hallelujah

Sermon

The Good, The Bad And The Redeemed

And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you--not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:21)

I'm told that back in the days of silent films one of the favourite genres was westerns. Trouble was without sound all you had were subtitles and a piano player tinkling away in the corner. It was hard to work out who were the good guys and who were the bad guys. So they developed a convention where the heroes wore white hats and the villains wore black hats. Even when films got sound and colour it was often clear who you were supposed to root for - the good guys over against the bad guys. Until things got complicated with films like "The Good The Bad And The Ugly". So where are we on that scale? Are we the Good? Are we the Bad? I'm not going to do 'the Ugly'. I don't want to offend anyone.

Are we 'the Good guys'? Sometimes yes. Of course we are. Sometimes we are kind. Sometimes we are generous. Sometimes we stand up for what is right and decent and compassionate even if the world wants us to be selfish, to hate those who are different from us, to turn away those who are hungry and frightened from our doors. We are human beings, made in the image of God; the God who calls us to love one another. And sometimes - often I hope - that love is obvious and always has been.

An archaeologist was once asked what one discovery defined the beginnings of humanity. She answered, a thigh bone that had been broken and had healed. This was a member of a hunter-gatherer tribe who was not able to hunt, was not able to gather, was a burden to all around her. But folk had clearly shared their food with her, maybe carried her as they moved with the seasons.

Is the kindness and love revealed in that thigh bone what defines us as humanity? Are we the good guys? Sometimes. But it maybe doesn't do to get too

full of ourselves that way. It's awfully easy to look down on others who aren't quite as virtuous as we believe ourselves to be. To become 'unco guid'. To become the kind of Christians that Burns lampooned in his poem "Holy Willie's Prayer".

Yes we are the good guys sometimes. We wear the white hats sometimes. We do what's right sometimes. But it's a dangerous path to tread to allow 'doing what is right' to lead us into self-righteousness where maybe we look down on victims of their own weaknesses.

So maybe not The Good. Then are we The Bad? Sometimes. Of course we are. Sometimes we are unkind. Sometimes we are greedy. Sometimes we do what is wrong and hurtful and hard-hearted even when we know in our heart of hearts that that isn't what we want to be; isn't what God wants us to be; isn't what we are made to be. We are children of God, made in the image of God, but sometimes we mask that image. We are selfish, we hate those who are different and we turn folk who are hungry and frightened from our doors.

Archaeology tells us, just as the Bible tells us, that from our earliest days we have turned on one another in hatred and violence: we have been Cain to each other's Abel. It tells us that the mighty have lorded it over the weak, have enslaved them. It tells us that the wealthy have accumulated gold and lived in luxury while the poor are forgotten.

Is all the selfishness and violence revealed by all this evidence what defines us as humanity? are we the bad guys. Sometimes. But maybe we can overdo that too and maybe the Church has from time to time overdone it. Perhaps we've suggested that folk are so lost in our sin that there is no hope for us. The Minister at Dryfesdale used to use the old prayer book and I remember him intoning mournfully during the first prayer, "We have sinned. We have grievously sinned. There is no good in us." And we wonder why folk stopped coming to church.

Maybe we didn't just acknowledge our sin. Maybe we wallowed in it. And that is a denial of the Gospel. It is a denial of the power of the Cross of Jesus Christ; the power that redeems us: puts us right with God - not because we deserve it or

because it makes us suddenly perfect, but because he loves us and wants us to be all we can be, to strive to be what we are meant to be and be all we can be in the confidence that when we fall short of that we are forgiven and can try again.

This passage from the letter of Peter can be hard to understand. It refers to obscure documents like the Book of Enoch and possibly the Book of Noah that aren't in the Bible and are largely lost. But our text is clear. We are washed clean through baptism and the Cross of Christ as an appeal to God for a good conscience.

To be able to look ourselves in the mirror and think, today I did some good things. Today I was kind. Today I was generous. Today I reflected the love of God in the world. Not because we are unco guid or self-righteous or because we haven't been tempted to wear the black hat but not to dwell on that too much. The call of the Gospel is to rejoice that we are God's redeemed children and all the times we have worn the black hat are forgotten and we have the chance every day to appeal to God for a good conscience: to be able honestly to say, today I have done my best as a child of God.

Because ultimately we are the Good and we are the Bad. But what matters is that we are the Redeemed.

Lord we are not always good. We often fall short. But we rejoice that you forgive the times we are bad: that we are redeemed through the Cross of your Son and ask that we may live in ways that reveal your love for the world

Offering

Chances To Grow

Lord we thank you
That we are not condemned by our failures
But given hope for eternal life
Through the Cross of your Son
We thank you for the chances you give us
Chances to grow
To forgive as you have forgiven us
To be closer to being the people you want us to be
We thank you for all that we have at your hands
Family and friendship
Food on our tables
Songs in our hearts
Shared laughter and shared tears
We bring these offerings thankfully
We ask you to bless them and us
We ask you to bless them and bless us
To doing your work in the world
Redeeming it and restoring it
Through the work of your Son
Our Lord Jesus Christ

Hymn

CH4 445 Alleluia! Sing To Jesus

Alleluia! sing to Jesus! His the sceptre, His the throne.
Alleluia! His the triumph, His the victory alone.
Hark! the songs of peaceful Zion thunder like a mighty flood.
Jesus out of every nation has redeemed us by His blood.

Alleluia! not as orphans are we left in sorrow now;
Alleluia! He is near us, faith believes, nor questions how;
Though the cloud from sight received Him when the forty days were o'er
Shall our hearts forget His promise, "I am with you evermore"?

Alleluia! bread of angels, Thou on earth our food, our stay;
Alleluia! here the sinful flee to Thee from day to day:
Intercessor, Friend of sinners, Earth's Redeemer, plead for me,
Where the songs of all the sinless sweep across the crystal sea.

Alleluia! King eternal, Thee the Lord of lords we own;
Alleluia! born of Mary, Earth Thy footstool, Heav'n Thy throne:
Thou within the veil hast entered, robed in flesh our great High Priest;
Thou on earth both priest and victim in the Eucharistic feast.

Alleluia! sing to Jesus! His the scepter, His the throne.
Alleluia! His the triumph, His the victory alone.
Hark! the songs of peaceful Zion thunder like a mighty flood.
Jesus out of every nation has redeemed us by His blood.

Benediction

Redemption

We are redeemed children of a loving Father
Go now to do your part in his redemption
His redemption of the world
By sowing seeds of kindness
By sowing seeds of peace
By sowing seeds of compassion
By sowing seeds of love
By sharing the love God has for you
A love that surrounds you now in this place
That will surround you wherever you go
And will bring you to our eternal home