

# Biddenden Centenary Quality:good

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] by the grace of God we have sought to prepare a praises of the sacred history of this house of God the church here and the pastors and I wish to say initially that I feel to be extremely unworthy to occupy the pulpit on this monumental occasion but I have been encouraged by several factors and the first is that my illustrious predecessor Mr. William Bynges who was pastor at the Dicca for 25 years preached the first two opening services of this chapel 100 years ago and then two years after that he together with Mr. Kemp formed the church here and he administered the sacred ordinance of the Lord's Supper to Mr. and Mrs. Kemp in fact to the church and so I feel it to be a special privilege and joy to my soul to follow my noble predecessor 100 years afterwards and then just a personal word

I also knew and loved dearly dear Mr. Kemp his ministry his precious unctuous gracious ministry and also revered him as an outstanding man of God and a man that exemplified the very nature and spirit of the Lord Jesus in fact if you had the life of God in your soul just to see him would fill you with a feeling of reverence and love and esteem a most blessed prince of the church he was and then I preached here I think on the first occasion in 1937 on a Thursday evening and at a later date on the Lord's Day and dear Melvina his second wife for he died as you know in 1932 his dear wife

Melvina entertained me and I shall never forget that Lord's Day and staying in Chapel House with her dear matron matriarch she was in the Church of God very learned stern she appeared but oh what a loving and gracious heart and on that Lord's Day old Mr Pearson the beacon announced that Victor would preach on Thursday evening and that was the first time and so you see I have somewhat of an intimate acquaintance with this cause of proof therefore as we are helped to the Lord and this is to his glory and in recognition of the fulfilling of the divine decrees and the raising up of

John Kemp and later Victor Pearson I want to just deliver to you this brief work first concerning this chapel as you probably know it was built by Mr James Hickmott who was a psalmist on his psalm for the whole area belonged to him so it was built by James Hickmott of Lashenden Frithenden who was a beacon of the Strict Baptist church at Smarden it's rather interesting just to go aside there as Smarden Strict Baptist Chapel commenced in the 17th century and has

I believe had or now has the 18th pastor so dear James built the chapel and the house the minister's house to go with it and the stable the coach house and also donated about an acre of land for the cemetery and the garden for the house and by deed of trust deed of gift this pass to the trustees it was completely free another point about it and that is he did not donate the land and build the chapel and the house and so on because of any division or bitterness none whatever he was all in love for he continued to attend and exercise his office at

[ 6 : 54 ] Smarton so you see there was no contention it wasn't a break away place by any means there's one other point and that is freely giving the whole and investing the same in trust he made a special point as you will see on the stone the frontal aspect of the chapel the facade of the chapel higher than this was in trust as a particular Baptist cause upon strict communion principles that's very important no deviations possible from that then he decided as the donor that there should be no collections or seat rents but that it should be supported by the voluntary system that is boxes in the vestibule no other way he intended this chapel not for divine services in continuity but for use once or more a month as required and then for no one minister but for itinerant ministers leave in this section

I will direct your thought into this channel we think of the elders of the Jews their testimony concerning the centurion at Caperna when they came to Jesus they besought him instantly saying that he was worthy for whom he should do this for he loveth their nation and he has built us a synagogue oh what a spirit of love must have been in the heart of James there was the son now moved by the powerful love of God I'm going to build a house for God I'm going to build the chapel house for minister I'll build the stable the coach house the traveling completely pray given and founded on these town principles now let us go to the second part of it the unique position of the chapel

Ebenezer chapel stands where four parishes meet namely Biddenden Frithenden Headgorn and Smarden the four parishes meet here that's why it's called Bounds Cross and I understand that dear old Mr.

Kent said had a saying that he was bound to a cross and of course that has many meanings but you can see the equation here four parishes meet and that's where this house of God is and that's why it's Bounds Cross and so this was very wonderfully fulfilled under the blessed and spiritual ministries of the two beloved pastors their influence what was it they both lived and died amongst their beloved flocks and this is the scripture that immediately comes to our spirit endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit and the bonds of peace and that's just what Bounds Cross stands for where four parishes meet the union of the people of God in Christ you probably never knew why it was called

Bounds Cross thus under the guidance and rich blessing of almighty God the auspices of this dear house of the Lord were good from the very beginning when the foundation was laid and throughout all the ensuing years according to this precious word the Lord hath been mindful of us he will bless us it's not only a retrospect and the present it is a prospect just a word now concerning the pastors John Kent from 1880 to 1932 he died on the 22nd of October 1932 aged 82 years he was deeply exercised about the sacred work of the ministry whilst living at

[ 12 : 55 ] Ticehurst and a member at Shover's Green under the pastoral care of Mr. Jones and this touches a chord in my heart the Lord gave him this very blessed word for he had a considerable degree of sickness at one time he was struggling to fulfill his engagements and he called on his physician a Dr.

Joyce who gave him medicine and he said to him you're in the second stages of consumption and he says that in this case it took 16 years for him to recover his normal strength now the Lord gave him this very blessed word I shall not die but live and declare the works of the Lord shortly afterwards you see that's related to a former affliction before he preached shortly afterwards Mr.

Jones asked him that is the pastor at Shover's Green asked him whether he might give notice that he would preach the next Wednesday evening he replied yes you might the Lord had settled it his first sermon at Shover's Green was from Hosea 39 O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself but in me is thine health this was about March April 1879 the church at Shover's Green sent him out and the pastor wished him Godspeed in the work of the ministry now I have put a word here the will of the Lord be done it's not a matter of any natural selection or human choice it is the will of the

Lord and this will demonstrate it Mr. Jones the pastor at Shover's Green concluded that the Lord had raised up his dear servant to succeed him at Shover's Green he fully thought that that Biddenden was the place appointed by God for him now we're coming up towards the finishing of this chapel and Mr.

Kemp coming here later James Hicknott the builder of Snardom heard Mr. Kemp at Frittenden he went there purposely to hear him who preached with such liberty and unction it was at this time that Mr.

[ 16 : 03 ] Kemp first saw this chapel before it was finished completed after preaching at Frittenden they brought him along and saw the chapel almost completed it was evidently powerfully impressed in his mind that is James Hicknott that dear Mr.

Kemp was ordained of God for Ebenezer chapel because four days after hearing him at Frittenden Mr. Hicknott made it known that he wished Mr.

Kemp to become the minister of the new chapel thing was settled which was to be opened the following month so you see it was before the chapel was opened my friends divine decrees remain unmoved the council of the Lord that shall stand there's such a sweetness about this to me Mr.

Kemp had an interview with James Hicknott on the 2nd of April 1880 and when the two men met James Hicknott invited Mr.

Kemp according to the Spirit's leading he wanted him to be led by the Spirit to come to settle down in chapel house rent free as minister of this sanctuary and receive whatever the people voluntarily put into the box or boxes in the vestibule and promised employment on his farm as often as desired now Mr.

[ 18 : 08 ] Kemp felt absolutely settled about it feeling feeling the Lord's powerful and sweet approbation although sorely tried and this is how he was tried shall I gather a congregation by my poor preaching no I fear not will will my preaching wear well so as to hold the people together will those who now invite me prove to be stable friends now this is how he was tried before God but being persuaded that it was of God and casting anger in the power and faithfulness of God he wrote accepting the invitation before the chapel was finished and this is what he said when he had been pastor 25 years at those sacred services he said

I came here to an empty chapel to a new place a new person now just think of it the face that the Lord gives his people he said yes there wasn't even a congregation I had been preaching only about 12 months when I was invited to come here before the chapel was finished I promised to come how wonderful are the works and ways of God dear friends how his counsels stand his purposes ripen fast unfolding every hour what a wonderful unfolding and so

I have made this note by faith Abraham when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance obeyed obeyed John Kempo obeyed now we come to the opening of the chapel 100 years ago it was opened on May the 5th 1880 mr.

William thine of dicker preached in the morning from so we preach and so ye believe 1st corinthians 1511 and in the afternoon from what think he of christ whose son is he st.

Matthew 22 42 now this is very sweet to me too the observation made by mr.

[ 21 : 36 ] kemp about the opening services he said sweet tears did I shed at that time under the preaching of William thine and truly the new chapel was consecrated to me consecrated very vital you know the glory of the Lord just flowed into this place and it was consecrated truly he said it was consecrated to me which helped me in my new field of labour into which I was now entering also it formed a sweet bond of union with mr.

vine mr. w. man of smarden preached in the evening from psalm 87 1 and 2 so you will see how the unworthy preacher this afternoon feels about following that venerable predecessor and I thank the dear friends for inviting one who is so unworthy now we come to the formation of the church this took place exactly two years after mr.

kent preached his first sermon in the chapel namely on may the 30th 1882 so god's dear servant saw the fruit of his labour and assisted by mr.

william vine seven united in church fellowship and order four had been previously baptized and dear mr. kent baptized three that was in the afternoon and it was in the evening that mr.

vine administered the sacred ordinance of the lord satyr to them but there's just a note here that I would like to give concerning mr. kent he was obviously a very sick man for it was wise for him to even attempt to baptize anyone let alone three but this surely is a word of encouragement to the lord's servants he said although weak in bodily I felt like a giant in the pulpit and in the pool and could have baptized in god's strength forty people now what a word for god's servants that is out of weakness made made strong what a blessed master we have so the church was formed just a few further words before we come to a hymn

[ 24 : 51 ] I'm going to say then the green pastures those green pastures of verdant grass where the flock fed and they were nourished the beloved pastor gracious meek gentle loving and faithful a father in god to many a wise counsellor a loving friend what happened he gathered around him a large congregation so large that they were sitting in the aisles and in the vestries and a number outside that couldn't come in they couldn't get in when he came there wasn't one person so he gathered around him this large congregation and a beloved flock whose souls he fed by the grace of

God leading them to the fountains of living waters and fitting them for the kingdom ever exhorting a precious Christ after 52 years was called to his eternal rest full of days and honour to see the king in his beauty and ever dwell in his embrace but I just want to say this to you there was a time very early in his ministry when he baptised several and he made a confession afterwards he said if only I had listened to conscience so there was one that he received who proved to be a great trial and he said in his heart he couldn't receive this person but he allowed it to be then there was another occasion when a man who joined them was a terrible trouble and absolutely filled

Mr. Kent with agony letters and speeches and a defiant behaviour and in the end he stood up in the middle of the service and attacked Mr.

Kent he said you're preaching at me and the poor dear man went through the very depths then there was another occasion in fact it was 1909 when he said that he was reviewing the past four years and especially the past two years and he said we've lost 50 and perhaps 60 years either by death or removal and it was a sad day for him he said my writing to a friend he said my illness he said it's not caused just by overwork he said it's day and night the burden that I bear with Ebenezer but he said concerning this 50 or 60 that God died or left he said

I am weighing this with the days of prosperity and I'm in this be still and know that I am God you see I don't want to present things just one side there's so much of this one side there's two sides my friends there's the joys and the sorrows the trials and the difficulties and the blessings just a note dear dear dear Richard Victor Pearson nine years after the blessed death of Mr.

[ 29 : 29 ] Kemp the church called one of their number dear Victor to the pastorate and for almost 21 years this dear servant of God was abundantly enabled to minister to the flock at Ebenezer as their loving under-shepherd until called home on the 11th of March 1962 age 74 just one little word his dear wife Mrs.

Kemp called her January Victor had come speaking to the pastor Mr. Kemp concerning the holy ordinances and she was greatly exercised and in this exercise her husband asked her to go into this field where you passed some of you to look at the sheep and she went and she so prayed that if this was right that either Mr.

and Mrs. Kemp would come out and speak to her and there she was with the sheep and out comes Melvina she says January you coming into Chapel How she said I must but I haven't anything I must in she went Mr.

Kemp heard her a little she hadn't very much beside but presently the Lord broke into her soul and so blessed her no both that time well this has been a sweet time to me I hope the Lord will help me just to speak a few words later but I do feel the reality and the blessedness of this and pray that there may be a most wonderful and sacred prospect for this church blessed be God God let us read our text in the prophecy of Jeremiah chapter 3 and the 15th verse Jeremiah 3 15 I will give you pastors according to mine heart which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding you will know beloved and spiritual hearers faithful readers of the scriptures of divine truth this was one of the outstanding promises to the repenting and returning of his people in

Judah I want to make it very clear in this brief sermon that the text is not the preacher's choice that we believe it is of God and so if that is so by divine confirmation and heavenly prole we have not only a most illustrious retrospect concerning Ebenezer chapel the church here and the beloved pastors the great and worthy prince who bemoaned so often the poverty and barrenness of his ministry before

[ 33 : 43 ] God and knew what it was for sanctified trials to lay him low in the dust before God and thus further exhort the dear Redeemer the Lamb of God a prince known not only here in these parishes but far and wide throughout the whole of our beloved denomination where his ministry was so prized and valued because this was an epitome of the promise here was a man that the Lord made a pastor a father in

God to many precious souls and according to his heart a man blessed with the very spirit and nature of his glorious Lord and beloved master let us bless God therefore for John Kent what a day this is a day to look back to the divine counsels of Jehovah the decree of salvation and all the heavenly decrees relating to his church and the decrees relating to the order of his church church do we not read in st.

Matthew these words that Jesus was moved with compassion upon the multitude because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd and so not only is this today a retrospect and a service of commemoration and love and praise and gratitude and adoration of the Lord it is also a day when we may think of the present and the present is that the Lord is in this place that the candlestick is not removed and the ark is not removed about twice a year we are favored to preach here in the week and we have almost always felt a special degree of heavenly unction light and power in the ministry in this place so we have the present how wonderful to be able to say and this is something that is indispensable and there's no substitute for it it is invaluable the

Lord is in this place he has not departed but I go from that to the prospect you may think in Zion today that in many cases the future the prospect is bleak it may seem to be so but oh how strengthening to living faith is the recognition that when dear Mr.

Kent saw the chapel it was not finished and there was not a single person here no congregation but he said yes this is living faith my friends and this is revelation of the divine purposes and decrees of Jehovah and the fulfilling of them divine decrees remain unmoved and how the Lord does fulfill all his counsel and his will and his decrees and so we look to the future and the future relates to what we have prayed for this afternoon that the

[ 38 : 55 ] Lord will give to this flock another gracious pastor I must say that it is in my heart for here it is I will give you pastors according to mine heart to feed you with knowledge and understanding let me just make an appeal to the spiritual here to God's ministers and his dear children is not this the divine order in his church what do you think for you still have in this area and in many parts of sassock sheep a flock of sheep now surely a flock of sheep is not complete without the shepherd this is the counterpart one is complementary to the other not complete without is it let not our beloved brethren whose itinerant ministry is appreciated and valued think that this is a word that would despise their labours turn from it it may be that our brethren have a yearning for a flock to care for and it may be that there's a flock somewhere in the

United Kingdom that is exercised and yearning and praying that the Lord would bring you to them so that the marriage may be complete but I make this general appeal to you is not this God's great order in his church for his people are his sheep this is the symbol of Christ like nature and spirit they are sheep docile docile meat inoffensive now wherever there is a flock of sheep they need a shepherd no one can obviously reject this as being the divine purpose and institution of almighty

God in his church and let us remember this afternoon and give praise to the Lord Jesus concerning his suffering shortish ship and that he laid down his precious life for a sheep the great shepherd let us bless God that Christ is risen and ascended and exalted at the right hand of the Sabbath let us bless God for his princely gifts and he gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of

Christ his precious ascension gifts it is worthy of attention some evangelists who carry the glad tidings far and wide and some pastors and teachers and you cannot assess the preciousness of these gifts being the very gifts of your exalted redeemer and the gifts that he has bestowed in order to gather out of the race of mankind his dear elect to feed their precious souls and to fit them for the eternal kingdom no price can be placed upon those gifts if you think of the agony if you go back to the good shepherd giving his life for the sheep if you think of these peerless precious gifts that you're exalted redeemer bestow all the value you cannot compute is it therefore established in your spirit that this is the divine order you'll see a flock of sheep you'll say where's the shepherd and the shepherd what is his work it is a vocation not mercenary it's a vocation he loves his sheep

David is a wonderful example of that shepherd and he could say knowing his own honorable and wonderful occupation as a shepherd he could say the Lord is my shepherd can you say it wonderful pastoral psalm 23 and also the Lord made him a shepherd over Israel and Judah what a king a king shepherd now there are dear friends here who enjoy this they enjoy pastoral care pastoral ministry and they enjoy a shepherd caring for their souls watching over them in all their ills and trials and difficulties ministering comfort where it is needed reproach where it is needed in travel of soul in secret which is manifested in their public pastoral ministry leading them into green pastures the verdant pastures for their souls and continually watching over their souls as those who must give a count is this

[ 46 : 39 ] God's order it may be that this preachment although short may stimulate this exercise both in the hearts of his servants and the people but here is a promise it is categorical it is positive it is a blessing to be sought prayed for earnestly that we may be graciously exercised in it and I will give you it's a gift I must speak obviously from the background of my own spiritual experience and also in relation to John Kent and Victor Pearson and Herbert

Dawson and others so many J.K. Popham think of it now how would I speak to you till death us do part a message and I will give you past I am sure that the potential of a God sent minister if the Lord has ordained him to this end that the potential of his ministry is never reached or fulfilled until the Lord appoints him as pastor shepherd of a flock and then just as you may see this in all divine appointments what may appear to have been latent talents and abilities are then brought to light and brought to the maximum exercise and this is in a pastoral ministry so what a word for you this afternoon and I will give you let me appeal to you from another angle and facet where was prosperity where the

Lord accomplished this union and bestowed this gift was there prosperity here indeed there was see the proof of it a most blessed permanent sacred wonderful spiritual bond and marriage between the pastor and the flock the shepherd and the flock there it is and just as your beloved savior one of his holy new covenant of his characters is the good and the great shepherd so he gives to his beloved servant this very spirit and nature of this shepherd I want just to notice a few of the salient points and obviously it will be condensed in this short season but although condensed it is something that is rich in my spirit now notice this and I will give you pastors according to my heart

I will give you and there are two asides to this an exercise flock and an exercise ministry that I will give you I'm not here really to refer to myself that I will to the glory of God in September 1936 the pastor elect of the dicker became seriously ill and I knew the nature of his illness my cardiac degeneration the seriousness of it some of the friends didn't think he could die but it came to a certain

Tuesday and being completely overwhelmed with anxiety and exercise and travel I was on my way to Brighton changed at Polgate and in the distress of my soul I went to the end of the platform and sat alone on a seat waiting for the connection no sooner had I sat down on the seat that the Lord came the great shepherd of Israel of his church and he got something in his hand and that was a dicker the church the flock and he put it into my heart and hand and it was done in a moment I hadn't even preached it was settled this is how the Lord works my friends it may be not in exactly the same way but he said

[ 52 : 45 ] I will give and it both ways he gave me that flock and two things I felt the first was the ponderous weight overwhelmed me I felt frustrated I fell for the earth but at the same time he gave me such love that I stretched forth my heart and arms and embraced it and that is where I spend today blessed be God they are so dear and so precious many of them now are in glory and many more will be in glory and they'll be the crown of rejoicing to men now the Lord did it I will give you there's a personal thing too now how would they know how would the people know my mouth was closed

I dare not reveal the secret it strangely enough God does move in a mysterious way that dear Mr.

J.K. was the first one that I ever spoke to about this he wrote to me he said your church bereavement is mysterious it must exercise all who are godly if you are disposed but call I shall be glad I felt inside now I know when I reached his room he put me in a corner I said Lord show me what to do in the end I said I must venture I told him he said I thought he would discourage me he said to me I the Lord will hasten it in his time I will give you and in the heavenly anointing of my soul on the Thursday that followed that is that followed the time of Holgate when the

Lord granted that heavenly effusion of the spirit so the people saw it now the wonderful thing was this their hearts were prayerful and receptive and waiting for the Lord to show them for the Lord to reveal to them and he did it commence with a few then a few more then a few more until they all saw it and some of the old ones said look the Lord will raise up a man I will give you pastors they had this confidence of faith oh what a gift how precious you cannot of course conceive really the deep sense of shame that I feel because of my sinful unworthiness and poverty and backsliding and barrenness sometimes but I do know that the living streams have ever flowed

I will give you a pass and the thing is that both ways James Hickmark must have been absolutely sure that this dear John Kemp was the one chapel wasn't finished in right ship dear John Kemp knew this was of God he said I didn't receive a word that I received this wonderful persuasion he was the one now see what we have to celebrate and commemorate this day my friends and I will give you a passage according to my heart and so we have two other things just to refer to they are according to the

[ 57 : 32 ] Lord's heart that is we may see several things in it one is according to the will of his heart his divine will and purpose and pleasure and decree and the other is they possess their thy grace the very nature and spirit of their beloved master the Lord Jesus their Christ life they're like their blessed Lord they give their very life for the sheep we have named before you that word concerning the Lord Jesus that he laid down his life for the sheep now a God given pastor gives his life for the sheep he withholds nothing spends his strength everything gives his life to the Lord for the sheep it's a wonderful thing isn't it

I don't know how many of you remember Mr. Kent but really just to see that dear man and hear his voice sing to melt your heart you would say what a man of God you revered him and you felt what a precious man he was what a father to care for these sheep to watch over them to lead them into these green pastures and to care for them in soul and body and family and circumstances and everything when they're sick when they're in trouble see there's everything there for whatever occurs with a flock one of the first things is oh send the pastor a word of comfort a word of strength or help or counsel whatever it is now you've enjoyed this

I pray that you may seek the Lord for the bestowing of this blessing upon Ebenezer nine years between Mr. Kent and Mr. Pearson now 18 years as John died what a blessing according to my heart to feed with knowledge and understanding to feed just give you a very brief word on some of the holy joys and privileges of the God bestowed pastor the first surely is to feed them not entertain them but feed them feed their immortal soul and I assure you that this means travel much soul travel and also divine revelation and inspiration from heaven so that there's a living stream that runs in the ministry so that there's a sunbeam a beam that shines from the sun of righteousness and all these pastures these rich pastures of verdant grass there's nothing more beautiful to think of in the earth than this idyllic it is to think of the sheep lying down or grazing in a verdant meadow and the still waters passing by and this is the ministry a pastoral ministry by the greater dead brethren do not be discouraged by what I have said it may be the lord will give you the same blessing it surely is an acne of desire so this is their work to see to care for to protect to seek that those that are wounded may be healed and those that are driven away may be restored to reprove and to instruct and to sit prepare for the kingdom of glory what an honour to sit souls ahead through the ministry and to lead them to go before them into the kingdom one of the great things that you may discern in the ministry of the spirit is this that it goes before your soul take a lord's day and if you may understand my observation it lands you in glory it doesn't leave you out in the wilderness it seems as if your soul gets home you've got the bright hope of reaching glory and another blessing is to be a spiritual father though you have ten thousand instructors in christ yet have ye not many fathers in christ jesus i have begotten you through the gospel i will give you according to mine heart to feed you with knowledge knowledge means



to know here spiritually what is knowable and what is it of chiefly of christ to know god to know the glorious being of jehovah to know his character and to know his dear son his rich atonement his suffering shortish his glorious victory the rich fountain of his blood opened the perfection of his obedience and to be sanctified by his pure body knowledge knowledge i remember so well mr raven saying to me privately once concerning and do not think that this is cynical he had heard a certain minister and he said that whilst what he preached was experimental and true he said there's no teaching no teaching it's like a deficiency no teaching no teaching no teaching it's christ this his person his attributes his priesthood his kingship his glory sees you with knowledge and understanding that is wisdom wisdom to see christ in the scriptures wisdom to walk of right wisdom to desire oh this wonderful experience so beloved here is here is this sacred influence of the spirit resting upon us as a directive and also that we may have our hearts filled with praise for this so precious gift and our hearts inspired so that we may seek it and i will give you pastors according to my heart to feed you with knowledge and understanding blessed be God pierc swept of instead of

