

21st April, 2024

The paper-version Service



To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Song:

What gift of grace is Jesus, my redeemer
There is no more for heaven now to give
He is my joy, my righteousness, and freedom
My steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
For my life is wholly bound to His
Oh, how strange and divine, I can sing:
All is mine!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

The night is dark but I am not forsaken
For by my side, the Saviour He will stay
I labour on in weakness and rejoicing
For in my need, His power is displayed

To this I hold, my Shepherd will defend me
Through the deepest valley, He will lead
Oh, the night has been won, and I shall overcome
Yet not I, but through Christ in me



No fate I dread, I know I am forgiven
The future sure, the price it has been paid
For Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon
And He was raised to overthrow the grave

To this I hold, my sin has been defeated
Jesus now and ever is my plea
Oh, the chains are released, I can sing: I am free!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

With every breath, I long to follow Jesus
For He has said that He will bring me home
And day by day I know He will renew me
Until I stand with joy before the throne

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
All the glory evermore to Him
When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat:
Yet not I, but through Christ in me!

Philippians 1:7-11 and John 3:16-21 – Abounding in Love

The Sermon by Timothy James

One ongoing theme of Philippians is **partnership** (as mentioned in last week's sermon – v.5 talks about “partnership in the gospel”).

The word used is the regular one for a business partnership. There are a number of factors in a business partnership: working together, contribution of capital, sharing of profit.

Why was this on Paul's mind? Epaphroditus has brought a cash gift, and Paul recognises this as an act in pursuance of an ongoing mutual enterprise (look ahead to chapter 4 v.15). It's important for us to understand it in this way: it is more specific and practical than “fellowship” or other possible translations – it involves shared work and financial responsibility. In v.7 Paul says to the Philippians that they all are “**co-partners** with me in the gospel of grace”.

What is this partnership? Paul has shared the gospel with them, and now they are making a substantial (financial) investment in it. Tom Wright says that “*the gift proves that they are ‘in the gospel business’ and ‘in the grace business’ with Paul*”. Paul was preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Roman world; the Philippian believers were both embodying that gospel in their city and resourcing Paul's wider mission.

So they have gone into partnership with Paul, he is grateful and he prays for them to get their “profit share”. What is it?

It starts with **love**. In Mark 12:28-34 Jesus said that the greatest commandment was to love God, and then to love others. This is the outcome of being in the gospel business, and it overflows into consequences for the character and effectiveness of the believers.

Love is not a sensation nor a sentiment (whatever its roots), but consistent applied action. It is practical, so it will overflow in particular ways for the one who is doing it. When you love someone, you want to understand them, to please them and to live up to them. “*Obedience... flowing out of*

gospel grace, becomes a way to know, resemble, delight and love the one who saved us”(Tim Keller).

Paul wants his partners’ love to result “yet more and more” in understanding the character of God and the gospel, exercising moral discernment, practising personal purity and becoming productive in right living.

This is a natural process: knowledge and insight lead to moral discrimination, which in turn leads to purity and productiveness. This knowledge, then, is not theoretical but practical – it is not just speculative, but guides action.

And the final output, the profit of the partnership is “fruit” (v.11) – what grows naturally from something. And of course that something is Jesus Christ himself.

We at Medstead and Four Marks, like Paul and the Philippians, are together in the gospel business and the grace business. We make our initial and ongoing “investments”, and we work together to generate a “profit”. We cannot be partners in the gospel of grace unless we understand that gospel, become fully invested in it and expect profit from it that we can get from no other source.

With whom are we in partnership? Not just with each other but with Jesus Christ. We are in his business, but amazingly not simply as his employees: he actually takes us into partnership with him! This is why we are “co-partners of grace” with each other.

So our “fruit” is “through Jesus Christ”. He is the founder and directing partner, whose initial investment of his entire self is the basis of the firm’s existence, solvency and profitability. Grace is the foundation, and it was contributed by Jesus when he sacrificed himself on the cross, and rose again to give us new life.

Fourth Sunday of Easter: Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life: raise us, who trust in him, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, that we may seek those things which are above, where he reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **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 forever. Amen.*

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, St Andrews and The Good Shepherd, the communities around us and our whole nation. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

At the Church of the Good Shepherd

- Tea and Chat: May 15th at 2pm in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Bowls: May 15th at 2pm in the Church.
- Coffee and Questions: April 24th at 10.30am in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise: 3pm Sunday, TBA
- The Community Cupboard, 2:45pm every Thursday in Church.

For Further information:

This paper and all parish details are on the website at <https://www.parishofmedsteadandfourmarks.co.uk>