

1st June, 2025

The paper-version Service



St Andrew's
Church



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks
Responding to God's Love



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.**

Hymn:

I hear the Saviour say,
"Thy strength indeed is small,
Child of weakness, watch and pray,
Find in me thine all in all."

Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.

Lord, now indeed I find
Thy power and Thine alone,
Can change the leper's spots
And melt the heart of stone.

Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.

For nothing good have I
Where-by Thy grace to claim;
I'll wash my garments white
In the blood of Calvary's Lamb.

Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.

And when, before the throne,
I stand in Him complete,
"Jesus died my soul to save,"
My lips shall still repeat.

Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.

The Sermon by Rev Howard Wright

Read Psalm 126 and John 15:9-17 – Challenged Life

We continue our series: 'Life to the Full'. Learning more of what it means to live as people close to Jesus. That is, seeking the Kingdom, and living life to the full – as defined by the Gospel fruitfulness.

Rooted and remaining connected.

Last week Timothy reminded us to connect daily with scriptures. It is rewarding to bury ourselves in it. Bishop and writer Tom Wright, says that unless we are in some way unable, we should read the whole Bible every year! And, whilst encouraging us to read large chunks, he also encourages us to take time to meditate and reflect on single verse or single passage, pursuing its meaning for us today.

This week we hear Jesus take us a step further, and he encourages us not just to know about him, or his word, but to know him as demonstrated by obeying and to acting upon his word. *'Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.'* (John 15:9-10)

As Jesus says in Matthew 7 (:24-26) we are not just to be hearers but does of his word: *'Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ... But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.'*

The risk is that whilst we might have a deep and encyclopaedic knowledge of the Bible, we may not actually 'know' or 'love' God, we might simply know about him. *'But knowledge puffs up while love builds up.'* 1 Corinthians 8:1.

What is the command (and the fruit)?

Jesus says: *'My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.'* ¹³ *Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.'*

So what is our love to be like: *‘Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails.* (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). Take a moment to read slowly through this passage and think about what love like this might look like if we ‘loved’ all those around us!

Loving is hard.

Love is not easy – it took Jesus to the cross!

Love is the first facet/flavour of the fruit of the Spirit: *‘But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.’* Galatians 5:22-23. We need to ask God for help, for a fresh filling of his Holy Spirit to love, as he has loved us.

We can begin by praying for those we love, and even more so for those we find difficult to love. Asking God’s blessing on another, is a powerful way to love, and to help us grow in love.

But the benefits are extraordinary.

Joy! Though we might sow in tears, we will reap in joy, (see Psalm 126), as God produces fruit in and through our lives. The sowing of God’s word, whether in the words or actions will never return void – see Isaiah 55:11.

Friendship with God. It is an extraordinary thing that Jesus calls us friends, and that we are invited in to know his plan, to glimpse his heart, passion, and intentions for us and the whole world. And more, we are invited to join in, to participate in the redemption of the world, by bringing in the Kingdom of God, in all the spheres of influence we have, by showing God’s in all we do (our Parish vision, in case you need reminding).

So, pause.

- How much has God loved us?
- How might we love more this week?
- Who are those today that we can reach out to?

7th Sunday of Easter: *O God the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: we beseech you, leave us not comfortless, but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is gone before, who is alive and 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 and Bowls: June 18th at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: June 25th at 10.30am in Church Hall.
- 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>