

9th August, 2026

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:

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the
King of creation!

O my soul, praise him, for he is your
health and salvation!

Come, all who hear; now to his
temple draw near,
join me in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, above all things so
wondrously reigning;

sheltering you under his wings, and
so gently sustaining!

Have you not seen all that is needful
has been
sent by his gracious ordaining?

Praise to the Lord, who will prosper
your work and defend you;
surely his goodness and mercy shall
daily attend you.

Ponder anew what the Almighty can
do,
if with his love he befriends you.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in
me adore him!

All that has life and breath, come
now with praises before him.

Let the Amen sound from his people
again;
gladly forever adore him!

The Sermon by Martin Beckwith

Read Psalm 108:1-13, Matthew 15:21-28 -- Awake

“That we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name”.

Magnifying the Lord's name takes several forms - giving trust, confidence, honour, thanks, respect, worship, veneration, recognition that the Lord is “worth it” and worthy of worship. For David it mingled alongside and attached itself to all his other emotions. He certainly wasn't perfect, but praise permeated his whole life; part of his reactive DNA. He was steadfast. Here it causes him to break out in this peon of praise and worship (v2-5) ...”I will praise you among the nations, the peoples, the heavens, the skies, over all the earth. The people of Israel in the OT were specifically called to be consciously, deliberately different, distinct, separate from the other nations and groups around them by demonstrating trust and praise and obedience and steadfastness to the God of Abraham Issac and Jacob, and who had brought them out of slavery in Egypt. And the principle is precisely the same for us today: worship weaved with work, praise with practicalities. Faith is meant to be lived out in the community.

Nowadays, in a diverse and multicultural society, surrounded by strong, competing and often incompatible ideas this is difficult. A steadfast walk with Christ is not cosy. But just as David was convinced to follow God so are we, with the additional calling to include the teaching of Jesus – fully the same God, yet fully human, crucified and risen, ascended and coming again to judge. In our society claims like that about Jesus can feel uncomfortable and even offensive. But if we dethrone Jesus we inevitably enthrone someone or something else – another authority, another version of truth, which leads to division and spiritual disaster as the people of Israel found to their cost many times and the NT writers warned about constantly.

So to be steadfast in Christ means to be rooted and stable in Jesus, the HS and the word of God. The Bible often calls it “Abiding”, which gives a sense of restful permanence. Jesus himself used illustration of a branch of a vine and the foundation of a house.

In the age of a quick fix, instant impression, steadfastness and hope in Christ develops slowly. It's not easy or automatic. It needs experience, including of failure and success, disappointment and perseverance in life. The Christian patiently and steadfastly builds trust in Christ - through daily experience, scripture, prayer and fellowship with others.

Obviously a steadfast hope in Christ does not protect from bad things happening. In fact, it often attracts them and amplifies them. It's no talisman or good luck charm. In some countries it's career or life threatening. Here, David, even as God's chosen head of state, was clearly in a tight spot. (v6) "Save us and help us that those you love may be delivered." The "fortified city" (v10) was beyond his ability unless God went before him. Despite his steadfastness he was surrounded by a powerful alliance of enemies. And he acknowledged that something had gone wrong and needed to be put right (v11) "God who had rejected us and no longer goes out with our armies."

And then God responds to David, v7 Listen, he says, every bit of your kingdom is mine – Shechem, Sukkoth, Gilead, Manasseh, Ephraim and Judah - all the territory I gave to Joshua centuries before. And because it's mine and I am steadfast in my covenant to you, you're safe too. And the enemy territory, Moab, Edom and Philistia are also, even more emphatically mine. To David these names represented real, physical, frightening hostile realities. To us they may be just a list of names read about in the Old Testament and with a bible atlas. But it's easy enough to substitute our own list of areas under attack and our own fortified cities of impossible dread. How do we react when confronted with giants?

We might be dreading this week's medical test results, hospital appointment or interview. Maybe a new school, new job, or the difficult social or family situation. Our families might be facing redundancy or business failure. Marriages fall apart. Economic hardship is real. There is loneliness, isolation, disability and infirmity And that's before we get to unstable internal and international politics, wars and rumours of wars, famine, fire, pestilence - the list is endless and repeats itself, time and again. You may know this psalm you'll know it is itself re-release. It's a combination of Psalms 57 and 60, themselves written when David had been in tight spots before - maybe a similar one to what prompted this current psalm. Often good to take a glance backwards as encouragement for the way forwards The effect is the same, "Thus far has the Lord helped us". He's done it before, he can do it again. The same yesterday, today and forever, "Who was and is and is to come". The covenant is the same, and the promise never to leave or forsake.

And that's just as well because we can't tell what will happen tomorrow and "human help is worthless" (v12.) But spiritually speaking we're children of God, bought with a price of Jesus' death, sustained with the deposit of the HS. When we have questions, doubts and fears, when life is not working out as hoped, we have to remind ourselves of God's presence and promise. It is not

that God has left us, although it may feel like it. He has not forgotten his promise. Sometimes we will have powerful experiences of God being with us, mostly a quiet assurance, and sometimes we just have to hold steadfastly to his promise that both the earthly and the eternal plans he has for us will come to completion.

So we can journey on confidently, despite the pressures and the fears, because with “God we gain the victory” (v13) by putting, keeping and reaffirming our steadfast trust “In Christ alone”.

10th Sunday after Trinity: Let your merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of your humble servants; and that they may obtain their petitions make them to ask such things as shall please you; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, 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: August 19th at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: August 26th 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>