

11th May, 2025

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.**

Hymn:

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our
eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the
Ancient of Days,
almighty, victorious, thy great name
we praise.

Unresting, unchanging, and silent as
light,
nor wanting, nor wasting, thou
rulest in might;
thy justice like mountains high
soaring above
thy clouds, which are fountains of
goodness and love.

To all life thou givest, to both great
and small;
in all life thou livest, the true life of
all;
we blossom and flourish as leaves
on the tree,
and wither and perish but naught
changeth thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father
of light,
thine angels adore thee, all veiling
their sight;
all praise we would render, O help
us to see
'tis only the splendour of light
hideth thee.

The Sermon by Rev Howard Wright

Read Genesis 12:1-9 and Luke 9:1-6. – Blessed Life

We continue our new series, 'Life to the Full'. Seeking to live as people close to Jesus, that is, seeking the Kingdom, and living life to the full – as defined by Gospel fruitfulness. And today – What are we called to?

Imagine, if someone said to you: *'I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'* (Genesis 12:2-3). And, imagine, if that someone had the power to make this happen – how cool would that be?

This is what God says to Abram – whose name is later changed to Abraham – and Abraham believes God. Today, around 2½ billion people declare themselves as followers of Jesus (about 1/3 of the world population). And you could add to the Christians, the Jews, and Muslims who claim Abraham as a 'father', an ancestor.

What does 'blessed' mean? We tend to use this word in two ways. Firstly, to be blessed means to be lucky, or happy to have something. We might say, 'I am blessed to live in this beautiful part of the world', 'blessed to have these friends', etc. Secondly it means to be set apart, to be consecrated, as we will today, bless the bread and wine for communion, or we might bless a person, 'God bless' we might say.

For Abraham, he was, firstly, blessed to a good life. He was wealthy in his time, though he never had his own land. He is the father of a great nation, with many descendants and influence. His name is great, he is remembered. And he was protected and granted safety. And, secondly, he was blessed, set-aside, for a purpose, all peoples are blessed through him.

What does this mean for us today? In the light of Jesus, what does this look like? We might start with the Beatitudes, read Matthew 5:3-12. These blessing are maybe not quite what we had in mind, but look at the promises. Promises of inheritance and life.

We of course receive earthly blessings, and many of us have a great deal, but, even if we do not have earthly things, we find ourselves blessed because of the hope that leads us forwards. Read, Ephesians 1:3, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, and Philippians 3:7-14.

We are blessed to be part of a great nation/people – part of a vast family. Our name is great and Christ's name even greater – even if belittled by others. As we will see Christians have had, and are having, a massive influence on history. God will bring justice upon the earth, in response to those who would wish (us) evil, and we all will answer to him - there are consequences to rejecting Jesus, the Lord, Saviour, King, and judge of all people.

And as we will see, all have been, and are able to be, blessed through us, the descendants of Abraham.

We are, and are to be, a blessing. Jesus and his Gospel has profoundly changed the world. Christianity has its roots in Judaism, which was a minority, exclusive, self-interested, and geographically restricted religion. But Christ's death and resurrection, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, has created a world-wide movement to which around 2½ billion people claim allegiance.

Christ's Gospel and his church, by the power of the Holy Spirit, has dramatically influenced and developed for the good, politics, law, science, ethics, education, art, literature, and social structures. Christ's principles have shaped ideas about human rights, healthcare, social justice, and the development of institutions like universities and hospitals.

There has been evil committed in the name of the Church, but be in no doubt that this is not representative of Jesus, and it will be judged severely by him. And, the good done in Christ's name, the lives saved, the people raised from oppression and poverty, the peace achieved, far outweighs those who have, or who would, twist Christ's words for their selfish ends.

We should celebrate the very much that has been achieved, in history and today, globally and locally. Tea and Praise, our Family, youth and children's ministry, the care we share is such a blessing to our communities. We'd love to do more, but let's give thanks to God for what we have done, are doing, and ask for his help to do even more.

Let's continue to seek and share God's blessing with a world that needs love, Christ's love, and life, the fulness of life that Christ offers.

4th 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 and Bowls: May 21st at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: May 28th 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>