

14th September, 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:

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall
rise to thee.

Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! all the saints adore
thee,

Casting down their golden crowns
around the glassy sea.

Cherubim and seraphim, falling down
before thee,

Who was and is and evermore shall
be.

Holy, Holy, Holy! though the darkness
hide thee,

Though the eye of sinful man thy
glory may not see,

Only thou art holy; there is none
beside thee,

Perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!

All thy works shall praise thy name, in
earth, and sky, and sea;

Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!

All thy works shall praise thy name, in
earth, and sky, and sea;

Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.

The Sermon by Rev Howard Wright

Read Revelation 1:1-8 and John 1:29-34 – The beginning and end

Written by John, maybe the apostle John – either way this doesn't affect its credibility and authority. Written probably during reign of the tyrannical autocratic emperor Domitian, so around 90AD. Domitian officially repressed Christianity as a politically and religiously deviant movement. So, Revelation is written to an oppressed group of churches clustered in the West of Turkey by John, who himself because of his faith is exiled on the island of Patmos – itself just off the West coast of Turkey. The Christians faced opposition to their faith and huge temptations to give in to secular ideals to avoid pain and/or pursue pleasure.

This book presents a vision of hope, based upon the past actions, the present power, and the future Kingdom and justice of God. Written not as a prediction about future history but as John himself says, to relate the word and testimony of Jesus Christ to his readers. Revelation can appear incomprehensible, but it makes sense in the context of God, the God who is King, ruling and controlling, who has ruled the past, the present and the future.

It is the revelation of Jesus Christ given by God to his servants. (v.1). It's all about Jesus, and therefore important to us. And here we discover that despite external appearances at times, nothing stops God's purposes for us, and all things will be well. Revelation is a letter written to the church by a pastor wanting to provide, as any pastor does, both encouragement, hope, and challenge.

There are symbols and metaphors and one of these is that of a marriage. The book of Revelation finishes with a marriage and Jesus is presented as the bridegroom and the church the bride. This is a common theme throughout scripture. This new series is part 1, with part 2 potentially in the New Year. This term's 'Part 1' will consist of an introduction across the first two weeks, firstly to the context and the bridegroom. And, then in the subsequent weeks we look at the 7 letters – letters to the church, the Bride of Christ, and so in one sense they are about the bride's preparation for her wedding.

Revelation gets its name from the opening words: *The revelation from Jesus Christ*. The Greek word for 'Revelation' is Apocalypse – and this book is written in the apocalyptic style of writing developed by the Jews in their later Old Testament history, which we see in part in Ezekiel, Zechariah, and more fully in Daniel, and

which was used more freely in the intertestamental books which we know as the Apocrypha. So, today's passage:

Everything is about Jesus. It's from Jesus (v.1), and, It tells us, *what must soon take place*. But these events, happening now and about to happen, are themselves the testimony/story about Jesus (v.2).

Jesus is Supreme. He has always been, is, and will always be see vs.4 & 8. He is the all-encompassing, above all, and beyond all. Pause and reflect how awesome and vast God is. The universe appears to be infinite, an impossible concept for us to grasp, and he called it into being an estimated 14 billion years ago, a figure incomprehensible for us. See Colossians 1:16.

This Jesus is *The Faithful Witness* (v.5). In John 14:7 Jesus declares himself the truth. He is *The Firstborn from the dead*. It is he who rises from the dead, to change the past, the present, and our future. It is an earth shattering event that continues to reverberate around the globe and if we receive Jesus, in our hearts and souls and through others to our families, our communities and all creation. He is *The Ruler of all kings*. All will answer to him, including the supposed powerful of the earth. He is the one king from whom all others receive and can lose their power.

Jesus is For us. He loves us (v.5), and has saved us by his blood on the cross. The depth of the love of God for us is such that that of a husband for a wife is used in scripture. We are so loved, our company so desired. He blesses us. He offers grace and peace (v.4); what else might we really want from life? And he has made us a kingdom of priests (v.6) to worship and serve, and represent him to others.

Jesus is coming as bridegroom, for his church, but also as Lord and Judge. He will return and all will see and mourn. Jesus' return will be terrifying. Have you ever had that experience of being somewhere that you don't feel you belong only to be made at home. We don't belong with Jesus, in God's presence, but he invites us in, he is our advocate and friend.

But there will be those who want to be their own saviour, who reject Jesus' invitation and for them his return will be truly awful. They will cling to this world, and with their hands full of stuff and self, they'll be unable to cling to Jesus.

Grace and peace is available, a life now and forever in company with the King. Choose life.

13th Sunday after Trinity: *Almighty God, who called your Church to bear witness that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself: help us to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may be drawn to you; through him who was lifted up on the cross, 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 Praise for Harvest: Sunday, October 5th at 3pm in Church.
- Tea and Chat and Bowls: September 17th and October 15th at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: September 24th 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>