

16th November, 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:

When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the Prince of glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.

See, from his head, his hands, his
feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled
down.

Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
save in the death of Christ, my God!
All the vain things that charm me
most,
I sacrifice them through his blood.

Were the whole realm of nature
mine,
that were a present far too small.
Love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.

The Sermon by Rev Howard Wright

Read Revelation 3:7-13 and John 3:33-36 – The Enduring Bride

After a break for Remembrance Sunday, in our series from Revelation, we're at the sixth of the letters, the letter to Philadelphia.

Philadelphia was an important but the least remarkable city of the seven, but it was remarkable to God. Though the city and the church were small, in God's economy they were a mighty community of Christians.

Jesus, as with the other letters, knows about this church. He knows their deeds and their 'little' strength. As with the church in Smyrna, but unlike the other five, Jesus finds no fault with the Philadelphian church. Instead he encourages them with reassurance of his knowledge about their situation, and confirmation of his return and of their future hope.

Five things are offered.

Firstly, there is an open door (:8).

Jesus is introduced as holding the Key of David.

We read about this 'key' in Isaiah, read: 22:22. Here a key given to Eliakim, to open and shut the door which gives access to the people of God to the presence of God. And, in Revelation as in rest of New Testament, '*... the privileges and promises given to Old Testament Israel have been inherited by the Christian church.*' (Michael Wilcock)

Jesus is the gatekeeper – he has the power to open or shut, and it remains so! Read Matthew 16:19. Philadelphia was located in a narrow pass between two mountain ranges, a literal 'doorway' between Asia Minor and Asia proper.

For the Philadelphians there is an open door. God in them will not be thwarted or diverted, he will have his way. Like the stone in Daniel 2, which smashes the statue representing the kingdoms of the world and grows to fill the whole earth, God's kingdom is unstoppable.

There is an opportunity for them to shine, to live for Jesus and share him with others, and this will not be taken from them. We are on the winning side! Sometimes it might feel like the world has gone mad, but God will be victorious.

Secondly truth and justice will prevail.

Those who have slandered them, will see the truth and will acknowledge their fault. There were those claiming to be Christians, God's holy people, but falsely. Sometimes most difficulty comes from those who think they're Christian, but are not – see Matthew 7:15-27.

Jesus is also introduced as the one who is Holy and True. In John 14:6, Jesus says about himself that he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that no one comes to the Father except through him. Truth is difficult to discern today, there are many competing 'truths' about gods and God, and about ourselves, our identity and value. 'Fake news' is the common dismissive response to many claims, regardless of their truth or not. But in this mess Jesus shines a true pure light – he is the way, truth, and life.

You may have heard of what has been dubbed the Quiet Revival, where from seemingly no-where in terms of understanding or previous contact with the church, younger people (Gen Z - 13-28 year olds) are seeking Jesus. One of the common comments from these young people and especially from young men coming to faith is that they're seeking truth, a truth that they can trust in and live by.

Jesus is *the* truth, and we need to be confident, and gracious in declaring this – the Philadelphian church, were giving it their best shot.

Thirdly, they will be spared the hour of trial that is coming.

This can be understood in various ways, but the most obvious allusion is to a key them of the rest of the book, that we will not face the judgement coming upon the world in the same way as the people of the world. We will have God as our companion and shield, or rock and hope.

Fourthly they will be like a pillar.

Philadelphia suffered the same earthquake as Sardis, in AD17, and much of it was destroyed, but the picture here is reassuring, of being solid and immovable, and again. This is reminiscent again of Eliakim, who would be a peg, fixed into the ground, from which much could be secured.

We, like Philadelphia, may have little strength, but we are able, by God's grace to stand firm upon his word, and will be safe place for others to fix to.

Fifthly, they can be certain of their belonging to God and preciousness in his sight.

The name of God, the owner, the name of the new city, the address, and, the new name of Jesus, will be written on these people.

This is a stamp of ownership, a guarantee of belonging, and an access all areas ticket. We are allowed into the very presence of God as his beloved children. Contrast this with the Old Testament system of the temple and the Holy of Holies. We will see God face to face! This is the most extraordinary and wonderful privilege and hope that awaits us.

So, hold on, a crown awaits those who are victorious. We are to be faithful, recognising that this is just temporary and the permanent is coming. And that like Christ, even though crucified and humiliated, we will be victorious, because every knee will bow at the name of Jesus.

22nd Sunday after Trinity: *Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: help us so to hear them, to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word, we may embrace and for ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ, 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: November 19th and December 17th at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: November 26th and January 28th at 10.30am in Church Hall.
- Christmas Tea and Praise: December 21st at 3pm in Church.
- 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>