

# 4<sup>th</sup> May, 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:**

See, what a morning, gloriously  
bright,  
with the dawning of hope in  
Jerusalem;  
folded the grave clothes, tomb filled  
with light,  
as the angels announce, 'Christ is  
risen!'

See God's salvation plan, wrought  
in love,  
borne in pain, paid in sacrifice,  
fulfilled in Christ, the man, for he  
lives,  
Christ is risen from the dead!

See Mary weeping: 'Where is he  
laid?'  
as in sorrow she turns from the  
empty tomb;  
hears a voice speaking, calling her  
name:  
it's the Master, the Lord raised to  
life again!

The voice that spans the years,  
speaking life,  
stirring hope, bringing peace to us,  
will sound till he appears, for he  
lives,  
Christ is risen from the dead!

One with the Father, Ancient of  
Days,  
through the Spirit who clothes faith  
with certainty,  
honour and blessing, glory and  
praise  
to the King crowned with power  
and authority!  
And we are raised with him, death  
is dead,  
love has won, Christ has conquered;  
and we shall reign with him, for he  
lives,  
Christ is risen from the dead!

## **The Sermon by Rev Howard Wright**

### **Read Genesis 1:24-31 and John 10:7-18. Fullness of Life**

**Today we begin a new series - 'Life to the Full'. Essentially, answering the question, 'what are we here for?'**

In the beginning, God made us, and makes us very good. The Genesis account and extraordinarily beautiful story. Extremely affirming of human kind – we're in God's image and not the out-fall of some god's curiosity, anger, or boredom, but made precious and valuable.

We are made as creatures, to relate to each other, and to relate to all of creation as its stewards, to care for and develop it. And, most amazingly, we are made, uniquely in all creation, for relationship with our Creator and Sustainer.

But all of this is broken. We deface God's image in us by rebelling against God's authority. And as a result what God made good is spoiled. Instead of being in God's image, we make our children in our image – see Genesis 5:3. We are unable to keep peace with each other – see the news! We live at dis-ease with ourselves, and, we attempt to hide from God, holding a distorted view of him, we make him in our image, simply dismissing his relevance and rejecting his authority.

Jesus comes to provide a way out of this problem. Jesus declares himself the gate of the sheep and the Good Shepherd. Jesus' hearers would have known that a shepherd would gather the sheep for safety, and especially at night, into mixed pens – with several flocks brought together. The pens in the fields were made by gathering stones into circular walls with a gap for the sheep to come in and out. In this gap the shepherd would lie as a door. A defence, keeping predators out and the sheep in.

The shepherd lay down (literally) his life for the sheep and Jesus lay down his life upon the cross for us – John 10:17-18. (See also John 14:6). How extraordinary, that we have messed up yet, God pays for us.

The second way Jesus' hearers would think about a shepherd, is as a metaphor for leadership – both that of the teachers of the law, and that of God (e.g. Psalm 23, Jeremiah 23:1, and Ezekiel 34:7–10). There were thieves who kill and steal, but Jesus is the Good, and trustworthy, Shepherd. And, in Jesus time, a shepherd had such a relationship with his sheep that they'd trust him and follow his voice – they'd no need for sheepdogs – and this is how they got their own sheep, and not those of someone else, out from the pen. Jesus says, his sheep, his people will know and trust his voice, responding to his call.

Jesus offers us abundant life, a life to the full. The Greek word for full is 'perisson'. This is a superabundance, an amount more than you would ever expect.

Our God is not just 'just', he doesn't give us only what we deserve. He gives so much more, he is superabundantly kind – he lavishes us with love and grace. Our life, our freedom, his care is so completely undeserved, but he gives to us eternal life – see 1 Corinthians 2:9 and Ephesians 3:20.

What is this superabundance of life. Well, it's not just 'stuff!' We may think that this is what we need, but even Abraham Maslow, put these things at the bottom.

Solomon had all the wealth, prestige, entertainment and pleasure, and yet concluded it was meaningless. The richest man in the world at the time, John D. Rockefeller, was asked 'How much money makes you happy?' and answered, 'Just a little bit more'.

Our real human needs are for love, security, significance, and purpose. We receive God's extraordinary love (John 3:16). He gives us eternal security (see Romans 8:37-39). He gives us extraordinary significance as children of God (see 1 John 3:1) and invites into a purposeful life, joining in the family business.

This life is found through our relationship with God the Father, through Jesus, and by the Holy Spirit – read John 17:3.

A word of warning – all else are thieves and robbers. Whatever others might say – Jesus alone is the way to the Father, and the way to life.

So, will you hear his voice? Listen daily, in prayer, in his Word, and (discerningly) through other Christians. Jesus' sheep hear his voice – they heed the Shepherd! And, receive his grace, his superabundant love. Know that you are loved, and called into life. There will be struggles now, but we are called to look up and walk forwards, in growing deeper in relationship with God and growing in fruitfulness. 1 Corinthians 13:12-13 says this in the Message version: *We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist. But it won't be long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright! We'll see it all then, see it all as clearly as God sees us, knowing him directly just as he knows us! But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.*

**3rd Sunday of Easter:** Almighty Father, who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples with the sight of the risen Lord: give us such knowledge of his presence with us, that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life and serve you continually in righteousness and truth; 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: May 21<sup>st</sup> at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: May 28<sup>th</sup> 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>