

5th July, 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:

Wonderful, merciful Saviour
Precious Redeemer and Friend
Who would've thought that a Lamb
could
Rescue the souls of men
Oh, You rescue the souls of men

Counsellor, Comforter, Keeper
Spirit we long to embrace
You offer hope when our hearts
have
Hopelessly lost our way
Oh, we've hopelessly lost the way

You are the One that we praise
You are the One we adore
You give the healing and grace
Our hearts always hunger for
Oh, our hearts always hunger for

Almighty, infinite Father
Faithfully loving Your own
Here in our weakness You find us
Falling before Your throne
Oh, we're falling before Your throne

You are the One that we praise
You are the One we adore
You give the healing and grace
Our hearts always hunger for
Oh, our hearts always hunger for

You are the One that we praise
You are the One we adore
You give the healing and grace
Our hearts always hunger for
Oh, our hearts always hunger for.

The Sermon by Rev. Howard Wright

Readings: James 5:1-6 and Matthew 6:19-24 -- Living Generously

James, the Lord's half-brother, writes to the church – to us. He calls us to take on the family likeness and join in the family business. James addresses not just what we say but what we do. It's good to believe, have faith, but it means nothing if not backed up by actions.

In today's passage James is at his most blunt. He 'thunders' like an Old Testament prophet. James knows how dangerous wealth can be. It's calculated that 15% of Jesus' teaching in the Gospels addresses money and wealth.

However, James is not just addressing wealth, he's addressing wealth as a god, as a diversion; not as a tool for the common good, but as a means of self-indulgence and power.

Money doesn't change hearts it reveals the flaws in them. It's not sinful, but it's hazardous if used unwisely. It's a great servant, but terrible master. It's not how much money do you have, but how much power does your money have over you! The comedian Jim Carrey has said, *"I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of, so they can see that it's not the answer."* Paul says: *'... the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.'* (1 Timothy 6:10)

James warns us of four dangers:

1. **Hoarding.** See vs 2-3.

Hoarding is holding on to what we see as ours. Like Gollum from Lord of the Rings, we risk obsessing over 'my precious'.

To know whether we are hoarding we must ask, 'where is our security?' Jesus says – read Matthew 6:19-24 – and tells this parable – read Luke 12:16-21.

Savings, investments, pensions, are all good stewardship, unless they are not just good but god to us. John Calvin said, *"Our hearts are idol making factories."* We are to seek first the Kingdom of God – invest in heaven, or in these 'last days' we'll find ourselves with nothing.

Fraudulence. See vs 4.

Fraudulence is a failure to pay our way. In our individualised culture we forget our responsibility to each other – especially the poor.

Read Leviticus 19:9-13. These are all rules about treating others fairly, valuing their life, loving them as you would yourself. And, why? Because God made us all for himself and for each other – not to make ourselves gods that others might serve our whims.

So, do go back to the shop when we've been undercharged – after all we'd go back if we'd been overcharged. Do treat the cashier, the waiter, the 'staff' well and be generous in tipping. Do fill in the tax return honestly and pay the Common Mission Fund generously – it's a chance share our wealth with others. And do, consider wisely your purchasing – our discount goods and cheap food might come at someone else's cost.

Indulgence. See v.5

Wealth is used for self-indulgent luxurious comfort – pandering to self without a care for others. For many today 'happiness is my right, and I can buy it.' We live in an age of self-denial when it improves our good looks, but of self-indulgence when it comes to pleasure.

Solomon experimented with this, see Ecclesiastes 2:10-11. As James warns us, self-indulgence is being like animals fed all they can eat, they are fattened for the day of their slaughter. Read Luke 16:19-31.

Betrayal. See v.6

Here we see, the exertion of power, which wealth brings, to dispose of others and the putting money before people. Do note that the legal language here implies using the courts to pursue others too - 1 Corinthians 6:1-8.

Judas, the most awful example of this, sold Jesus for money! We can risk our own relationships with family, friends, colleagues, or ultimately with God, for the sake of making money! If so, wealth has stolen your heart and we are betraying others.

Conclusion: James speaks of the rich very harshly – perhaps because he recognises the danger of a settled church – such as we are. Albert Barnes wrote in a previous century: *'There is no sin in merely being rich; where sin exists amongst the rich, it arises from the manner in which wealth is acquired, the spirit which it tends to engender in the heart, and the way in which it is used.'*

Read 1 Timothy 6: 6-19 and Matthew 6:20-24

And pray for yourself and others that we might be clear minded and seek that which brings the fulness of life eternally – the Kingdom of God.

5th Sunday after Trinity: Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified: hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people, that in their vocation and ministry they may serve you in holiness and truth to the glory of your name; through our Lord and 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: July 15th at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: July 22nd 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>