

6th July, 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:

The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is his new creation,
By water and the word;
From Heav'n he came and sought
her
To be his holy bride;
With his own blood he bought her,
And for her life he died.

Elect from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the Earth,
Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses,
With every grace endued.

'Mid toil and tribulation
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace forever more;
Till with the vision glorious
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious
Shall be the Church at rest.

O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we
Like them, the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with thee;
There, past the border mountains,
Where in sweet vales, the bride
With thee, by living fountains,
Forever shall abide.

The Sermon by David Duffin.

Read Colossians 1:3-14 and Luke 10:1-12 – Gospel Life

In the passage we have just read in Luke – Jesus sent out 72 others (plus the 12 disciples that we read of at the start of Chapter 9 – they were sent out to prepare the way for Jesus. We too as believers have a divine commission to prepare the way for Jesus to enter the hearts of those who will come to faith. While the great commission at the end of Matthew (Go and make disciples of all nations) was given to the disciples, we are invited many times in the Bible to make the glorious gospel known to those who live in total ignorance of its message or have chosen to reject it.

As we look at the world around us and consider the desperate plight of those who have not listened too or refuse to accept the most important message that can ever be heard, surely our hearts must be filled with concern for their salvation. The Church (that is the body of believers), has a message that **only it** can proclaim. It is vital therefore that it makes proclamation of the message at the centre of its activities.

In Jesus's instruction to the 72 – the first thing that He mentioned was the need to “pray to the Lord, who is in charge of the harvest to ask Him to send out more workers”. It is still sadly true today that there are few willing to boldly proclaim the truth contained in the Bible, so we need to do as Jesus says and pray for more people to share this message, together with the boldness required. Jesus warned the 72 that they were going out as “lambs among wolves” - the work is not easy.

What then is the message of Christianity that needs to be presented to the world?

It is Unique.

There is no other message contained in the world that resembles this Gospel.

Whereas the Bible message comes from the God who made us. It is not something that we have dreamed up, but is a direct revelation to us. We therefore can trust the contents of the Bible and need to heed and pass on the message.

Our sins have separated us from God. The marvel of the gospel is that God in His love has made salvation available to us as a free gift. Other religions require works to placate their “God”, but we are saved by trusting in the sacrifice of God's Son on our behalf. Saved from what? Ultimately the wrath of God. God is a judge who pronounces judgement but also offers a way of escape in that our punishment has been taken by His Son.

We must in the words of Jesus be “born again”. We need new spiritual life, without which we have no hope of knowing God or being accepted by Him.

The urgency of the message

This message is more important than life or death – it is an issue that affects spiritual life and death – an eternal issue. Its message is addressed to each individual one of us and tells us with clarity that God recognises two types of people – those who know and want to follow Him and those who do not.

Without this message there is no ultimate hope. Men hope that perhaps with education and a few more million years, that we may have sorted our problems, but

the Bible makes it plain that this world will not get better – Jesus told us of what the world will be like when He comes again to judge the world (Matthew Ch 24).

The Christian message is not just something that we “bolt onto” our lives, an optional extra, a means of making us a bit happier - it is literally life-changing. A life change in which God writes His law in our hearts, so that we change from wanting to live for ourselves, to wanting to live in a way that pleases Him. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”. (2 Cor Ch 5:17).

This message must not be drowned out by other issues or by making it more palatable. We can so easily be sidetracked by trying to make the world a better place, when without this message people blindly continue in their path of sin. Sin manifests itself in many ways, and the **root cause** (that is rebellion against God) must be dealt with by pointing people to Christ, who alone has the power to change lives.

Both John the Baptist and Jesus spoke urgently of the need for repentance – a change in direction from following our way to following God's way. While we are not saved by good works, if the message of the gospel has not changed our desires and actions, then we might well question whether we have really accepted this message. Jesus said that we would be known by our fruits.

Ultimate Consequences

When Jesus sent out the disciples to prepare the way for Him – He indicated that they would not always be welcomed. Despite Him being the best message that this world has ever received, despite the miracles that He did - many rejected Him.

The situation has not changed – this is summed up in the verse John Ch 3 :19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved **darkness** instead of light because their deeds were evil.

Many people shut their ears to this message, even when their conscience tells them that there is truth in what they hear and that their lives will need to change if they listen - so they hurry on by. They would prefer Frank Sinatra's song “I did it my way” and they are as the Bible puts it “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God”.

In Chapter 9 of Luke, Jesus said these sobering words :-

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

Rejection of this message has very serious consequences – we see this in the passage we read together – Jesus said that Sodom (a city that was destroyed by God for its wickedness) would be better off on judgement day than the town that saw the Messiah but **rejected** Him.

Rejection of this message leads to an eternal separation from God. There is a day of judgement coming when people will be separated into those who know God and those who don't. Heaven and Hell are both realities and Jesus spoke of Hell more than He did of Heaven.

There will be no sin in Heaven, therefore any who wish to continue in their sinful ways will have no place there.

God does not want to send us to Hell, which is why He has provided Jesus and His death and resurrection (where He took the punishment for all our sins) as the way of salvation to us, and as an **utterly assured** means of avoiding His wrath against sin. Like Paul those of us who have trusted in this salvation have no condemnation!

So we have seen that this message is Unique, it is Urgent and has Ultimate consequences.

We are in the possession of the greatest news that this world has ever known – dare we keep silent, while we see so many who are headed the wrong way? In God's strength we must go forth and spread the good saving news of the gospel.

3rd Sunday after Trinity: *Almighty God, you have broken the tyranny of sin and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts whereby we call you Father: give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service, that we and all creation may be brought to the glorious liberty of the children of God; 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: July 16th at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: July 23rd 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>