

# 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2025

## The paper-version Service



**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:**

Before the throne of God above  
I have a strong and perfect plea:  
A great High Priest whose name is  
Love,  
Who ever lives and pleads for me.  
My name is graven on his hands,  
My name is written on his heart.  
I know that while in Heav'n he  
stands  
No tongue can bid me thence  
depart,  
No tongue can bid me thence  
depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair  
And tells me of the guilt within,  
Upward I look and see him there,  
Who made an end of all my sin.

Because the sinless Saviour died,  
My sinful soul is counted free,  
For God the just is satisfied  
To look on him and pardon me,  
To look on him and pardon me.

Behold him there, the risen Lamb,  
My perfect, spotless righteousness,  
The great unchangeable I AM,  
The King of glory and of grace.  
One with himself I cannot die;  
My soul is purchased by his blood.  
My life is hid with Christ on high,  
With Christ, my Saviour and my  
God,  
With Christ, my Saviour and my  
God.

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

### **Read Isaiah 40:12-17, Mark 12:13-27 – Being Wise**

Mark's account (Gospel) is recorded to help us get who Jesus is. The first 8 chapters build up the evidence to Jesus as the Messiah, and by this Mark understood, Jesus is God among us. And, this is how Jesus understood himself and the reason he was killed.

In the later chapters, including our reading today, Mark is demonstrating, what it means to say Jesus is God, the implications for Jesus and for us. Here today, Jesus is being challenged by the religious authorities who are trying to catch him out.

There is stuff in today's reading about politics and heaven, that is eternal life, but I want to focus on two things – 'Whose image and inscription is this? And, so what?'

The coin Jesus is shown would have borne the image of Caesar, (Tiberius Caesar, ruled from 14AD – 37AD) and an inscription. The coin shown in the picture is likely the type and the Latin inscription translates: "Tiberius Caesar, son of divine Augustus" / "High Priest".

Jesus says that, as it's clearly Caesar's, after all his picture is on it, we should give it to him. He's not saying that we should check all our coinage and bank notes – I'm not sure what we do with contactless – and post it back to the King. He's saying, as it is, it's on loan, and if Caesar wants it back, let him have it.

But Jesus also says, 'Give to God what is God's.' So what is God's?

We all have obligations. We all have legal obligations to the state, that is, obedience to the law, and paying taxes. Some of us have other financial obligations, to repay debts on a house or car. We all have what we might call, moral obligations, that is, obligations to treat others well, not to interfere when it's none of our business, but to help when people need help.

And, we all have an absolute obligation to our Creator. If God made us, then we belong to him. He allows us autonomy, but we are ultimately his. We are but stewards of our lives, they are on loan, and we're accountable to him.

We are made in God's image, clear from the beginning of the Bible, like the coin is in the image of Caesar and belongs to him. The inscription on the coin says "Tiberius Caesar, son of divine Augustus" / "High Priest". So what inscription is on us?

In baptism today we asked: Do you reject evil? Do you turn to Christ as Saviour? Do you turn to Christ as Lord?

These questions not just for Parents and God parents. If we are claiming to be Christian, the same questions exist for us. In baptism we publicly say that the inscription on this person is belongs to Jesus – who is the Christ, the Saviour and King. It's like putting a badge on, which we wear with pride.

Whether we have this inscription, or believe in God or not, we belong to God. To those who didn't get it, Jesus challenged them – you've not consider the evidence, you're badly in error!

The question is what inscription is on us. If the coin had been made with Caesar's image but someone had defaced it, putting their own image in place and their own inscription. Perhaps, 'self-made person', 'answerable to myself only', 'lord and master of me.' In the case of a coin, it may be worth something to a collector, but it would no longer be legitimate tender, or welcomed at the bank!

So the image of God is on us all. We have obligations, we are accountable. What will we write as our inscription?

**Sunday Next before Lent:** Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness, and was tempted as we are, yet without sin: give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit; and, as you know our weakness, so may we know your power to save; 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: March 19<sup>th</sup> at 2pm
- Coffee and Questions: March 26<sup>th</sup> at 10.30am in Church Hall.
- Easter Tea & Praise: Sunday 6th April, 3pm.
- 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.pariahofmedsteadandfourmarks.co.uk>