

10th May, 2026

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:

Jesus, I my cross have taken,
all to leave and follow you;
destitute, despised, forsaken,
you on earth once suffered, too.
Perish every fond ambition,
all I've ever hoped or known;
yet how rich is my condition,
God and heaven are still my own!

Let the world despise and leave me;
they have left my Saviour, too.
Human hearts and looks deceive me;
you are not, like them, untrue.
And, since you have smiled upon me,
God of wisdom, love, and might,
foes may hate and friends may shun me;
show your face, and all is bright.

Go, then, earthly fame and treasure!
Come, disaster, scorn, and pain!
In your service pain is pleasure,
with your favour loss is gain.
I have called you Abba, Father;
you my all in all shall be.
Storms may howl, and clouds may gather,
all must work for good to me.

Haste, my soul, from grace to glory,
armed by faith and winged by prayer;
all but heaven is transitory,
God's own hand shall guide you there.
Soon shall end this earthly story,
swift shall pass the pilgrim days,
hope soon change to heavenly glory,
faith to sight and prayer to praise..

The Sermon by Timothy James

Read James 2:1-13 and Matthew 7:1-6 – Living Justly

James is clearly addressing a real and persistent issue among his readers. Earlier he speaks of the poor being humiliated (1:9-11), and later he will directly confront the wealthy who exploit and oppress others (5:1-6). We are entering a community struggling with the moral and spiritual implications of wealth and poverty within its own life. This may be true in our church, too.

James 2:1–13 sets up a sharp contrast between two ways of treating people. On the one hand there is “partiality” – literally, face-value judgement. On the other hand there is what he calls “mercy”.

He is identifying two things very clearly. One, a **sin**: partiality – treating people according to status, appearance, or wealth. This is a breach of the second half of the Great Commandment: to love your neighbour as yourself. The other, what is missing: the virtue of **mercy**.

James ties that virtue back to the character of God himself. Mercy is central to the biblical account of God. In Exodus 34:6–7 the LORD reveals himself as “a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy and faithfulness.” We hear it in Psalm 103: “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in mercy,” and in Psalm 136, where the refrain is repeated again and again: “for his mercy endures forever.” Paul affirms repeatedly that God is without partiality—there is no “face value” judgement with him.

Mercy is not only something God **shows**. It is something God **requires**. We hear it in Micah 6:8: “What does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”, and in Hosea 6:6: “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” (a text taken up by Jesus himself in Matthew 9:13 and 12:7). In the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 5, the blessedness of the poor in spirit and the merciful (vv. 3 and 7) shows that this divine character is to be reflected in the life of his people. Mercy is what it looks like when we love our neighbour. So mercy becomes

diagnostic of genuine faith. Without it, James implies, we stand under judgment.

We see this pattern throughout the Old Testament narrative. The loyalty between Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1:8; 3:10) and the relationship between David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 20) are described in terms of a costly, committed faithfulness, even at personal cost. This is faithful love within a binding relationship, rooted ultimately in God's covenant with his people. Mercy is not simply a human virtue, it is participation in the character of God himself.

So when we in the church show mercy, we are participating in and anticipating the final triumph of God's mercy. What we do now is not merely ethically significant; it is revelatory. It discloses the reality of faith, whether grace is truly at work in us.

This is why James is so direct. When we show partiality, we fail to reflect the likeness of God, we disobey the command of Christ, and we call into question the reality of our faith. But when we show mercy, the opposite is true: we reflect our Father's character, we obey his Son's teaching, and we show that his Spirit is at work within us.

How, then, do we develop and exercise mercy in our own lives? What opportunities is God placing before us to reflect the family likeness, to obey the command of Christ and to live out a living faith? Where, concretely, does our community still fail to embody mercy rather than status? And how does the impartiality of God reshape the way we relate to one another—not in theory, but in the ordinary patterns of church life.

6th Sunday of Easter: *God our redeemer, you have delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of your Son: grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life, so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy; 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 20th at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: May 27th 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>