

12th January, 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:

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty,
the King of creation!
O my soul, praise him, for he is your
health and salvation!
Come, all who hear; now to his
temple draw near,
join me in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, above all things
so wondrously reigning;
sheltering you under his wings, and
so gently sustaining!
Have you not seen all that is
needful has been
sent by his gracious ordaining?

Praise to the Lord, who will prosper
your work and defend you;
surely his goodness and mercy shall
daily attend you.
Ponder anew what the Almighty can
do,
if with his love he befriends you.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in
me adore him!
All that has life and breath, come
now with praises before him.
Let the Amen sound from his
people again;
gladly forever adore him.

The Sermon by Rev Timothy James

Read Isaiah 60:1-5 and Mark 9:2-13 -- Being God

The first three gospels (and II Pet. 1:16-18, too) give prominence to the transfiguration, but it is not necessarily easy to understand the importance of this remarkable event. This may perhaps be because we tend to look at it as an isolated incident, rather than see how it meshes with Mark's wider narrative.

The first "movement" of Mark's gospel (chapters 1-8) is all about **who Jesus is**. The answer to this is given by several voices:

- the voice at Jesus' baptism announcing "*You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.*" (1:10)
- Peter's voice as he achieves his breakthrough insight, saying "*You are the Messiah*" (8:29)
- the voice on the mountain in today's reading, proclaiming "*This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!*" (9:7)
- the high priest's sceptical voice at Jesus' trial, demanding "*You are the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?*" (14:61)
- the centurion's voice at the cross, exclaiming "*Truly this man was God's Son!*" (15:39).

So this extraordinary event on the mountain does several things in Mark's narrative.

First, it confirms Peter's breakthrough, with direct speech by a heavenly voice confirming Jesus' Son-ship.

Next, it is a turning point of Jesus' ministry, like his baptism. It introduces the second "movement" of Mark's gospel, which is all about **why Jesus must die** – about the cross.

And importantly, it confirms Jesus' fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. As Tom Wright says, "*The new events [of Jesus' earthly ministry] are able to be seen as the fulfilment of ancient prophecy (and Mark, like the other evangelists, is clear that this is the only right way to see them).*"

Howard, in his sermon on 24 November, referenced the prophecy of Malachi, which promised that God would send Moses and Elijah before his purposes for his people were fulfilled. These colossal servants of God both received epiphanies –

direct experiences of God's presence – on high mountains: Moses on Sinai, when he received God's law for his people (and his face shone because he had been talking to God) (Ex 24:15 & 34:29); and Elijah on Horeb, where he was commissioned to anoint kings and prophets (I Ki. 19:8).

Epiphanies do seem to result in commissions.

And in Deuteronomy God promises to raise up a prophet like Moses and says "*you shall heed such a prophet*" (Deut. 18:15-19). Jesus is that prophet, and he brings to fruition everything the Law and the prophets had been designed to prepare God's people for. This epiphany on a mountain, witnessed by the disciples, dramatically demonstrates the completion of God's design.

So the coming events of Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension and sending out of the apostles fulfil the vision of the Hebrew scriptures, and this is what shows that Jesus is the true Messiah of God, and Son of God. Everything that has happened in the life of God's people has been leading up to this.

So how are we to respond? The voice on the mountain tells us "***Listen to him!***" (v.7) – but what does that imply?

Listening to Jesus is not just informative or even enlightening, but will demand **following**, and following in a particular way. The transfiguration follows directly after Jesus' challenge to his followers to "*take up your cross*" (8:34). As Richard Hays says, in choosing to follow a crucified Messiah we are choosing our own identity. He continues "*The disciples are summoned to follow, and the single fundamental norm is laid down in the narrative of Jesus' own death on the cross*".

So our response to the transfigured, shining figure of Jesus must be to follow him on the sacrificial way of the cross.

1st Sunday of Epiphany: Eternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit: grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit, that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children; 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: January 15th at 2pm in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Bowls: January 15th at 2pm in the Church.
- Coffee and Questions: January 22nd at 10.30am in the 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.pariahofmedsteadandfourmarks.co.uk>