

12th May, 2024

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.**

Song:

Be still, my soul; the Lord is on thy side;
bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
in every change He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul; thy best, thy heav'nly
Friend
through thorny ways leads to a joyful
end.

Be still, my soul; thy God doth
undertake
to guide the future as He has the past.
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing
shake;
all now mysterious shall be bright at
last.
Be still, my soul; the waves and winds
still know
His voice who ruled them while He
dwelt below.

Be still, my soul; when dearest friends
depart,
and all is darkened in the veil of tears,

then shalt thou better know His love,
His heart,
who comes to soothe thy sorrow and
thy fears.
Be still, my soul; thy Jesus can repay
from His own fullness all He takes
away.

Be still, my soul; the hour is hast'ning
on
when we shall be forever with the
Lord,
when disappointment, grief, and fear
are gone,
sorrow forgot, love's purest joys
restored.
Be still, my soul; when change and
tears are past,
all safe and blessed we shall meet at
last.
Be still, my soul; when change and
tears are past,
all safe and blessed we shall meet at
last.

The Sermon by Timothy James

Read Acts Chapter 1

This is the Sunday between Ascension Day and Pentecost, and the set reading is the account in Acts Chapter 1 of the choosing of Matthias as Judas's replacement among Jesus' apostles.

We don't know much about Matthias. This is the only place in the Bible that he is mentioned, and there isn't even an agreed tradition about what happened to him afterwards. We know only what this passage says.

What it tells us is that Jesus promised to "the apostles he had chosen" (v.2) that he would send the power of the Holy Spirit to them; he told them to be his witnesses (v.8); and then he ascended.

Peter persuaded the group of Jesus-followers that the gap among the Twelve needed to be filled with a disciple who had been present throughout the whole of Jesus' ministry, from his baptism by John to his ascension. Why? Because he had to "become a witness to his resurrection" (v.22).

Matthias was one of two qualified disciples, and was prayerfully chosen to join the Twelve.

This story is important because of something called the apostolic tradition. "Tradition" means "what is handed on". Everything we know about Jesus is known because of what eyewitnesses handed on. The first Christians followed the teaching of the apostles, and the gospels and other New Testament writings were firmly based on the testimony of the people named in them, who contributed what they had experienced when they met Jesus. For example, we know what happened at the cross and at the tomb on Easter day because of what the women, who were there, gave witness to.

We can rely on the Bible accounts because these people took responsibility for their testimony, and the Twelve, who had been with Jesus

“from the beginning” stood behind them as guarantors of their truth. This was the group Matthias was being chosen to join.

As a result, everybody can know Jesus at one remove, by listening to reliable accounts. But this is still hearsay. That is clearly not enough: like Matthias, we need to know Jesus directly, without any intermediaries. Then, like him, we can be witnesses to the resurrection.

As witnesses, we have the responsibility to do what Jesus talked about in the gospel reading.

John’s gospel is full of witnesses and their testimony, but the passage in chapter 17 shows the consequence for us who know Jesus directly. His Father gave us to him (v.6), and he has given us the words his Father gave him (v.8); and now he has sent us into the world, as his Father sent him (v.18). The purpose must be for us to complete his purpose, by passing on his words.

This became possible when the power of the Spirit came on the Twelve (including Matthias) at Pentecost, as we will celebrate next week. The words of Jesus, and the testimony to meeting him, went out into the world in that power, and these are still spreading.

We are simply the most recent link in the chain of the apostolic tradition: it was handed on to us, and we must hand it on to others. What will we do to make sure the chain remains unbroken, the witness continues to be passed on and the purpose for which he came into the world continues to be fulfilled?

Seventh Sunday of Easter: O God the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: we beseech you, leave us not comfortless, but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is gone before, 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: May 15th at 2pm in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Bowls: May 15th at 2pm in the Church.
- Coffee and Questions: May 22nd at 10.30am in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise: 3pm Sunday, TBA
- 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>