

15th June, 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:

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
does its successive journeys run,
his kingdom stretch from shore to
shore,
till moons shall wax and wane no
more.

To him shall endless prayer be
made,
and praises throng to crown his
head.
His name like sweet perfume shall
rise
with every morning sacrifice.

People and realms of every tongue
dwell on his love with sweetest
song,
and infant voices shall proclaim
their early blessings on his name.

Blessings abound where'er he
reigns:
the prisoners leap to lose their
chains,
the weary find eternal rest,
and all who suffer want are blest.

Let every creature rise and bring
the highest honours to our King,
angels descend with songs again,
and earth repeat the loud amen.

The Sermon by Rev Howard Wright

Read Galatians 5:16-26 and Matthew 13:31-33

We continue our series Life to the Full. Seeking to live as people close to Jesus, that is, seeking the Kingdom, and living life to the full – as defined by the Gospel fruitfulness.

This Sunday is also the 800 year celebration for St. Andrew's of continuous ministry, Trinity Sunday and Father's Day!

The Trinity is one of the most beautiful things about God. It's reveals a most extraordinary character of community and love. The fruit of this community and love is seen in God's most beautiful and remarkable love for us.

The character of God and this relationship within the Trinity is an inspiration and example to us, for the development of our character – and perhaps today even more significant for those of us who are parents and in particular fathers.

We'll try to bear this in mind as we look at the this wonderful passage in Galatians.

Paul challenges us, live by Spirit – you'll not get all you want. But, you will satisfy the deepest and truest desires of your heart. Our hearts are restless. Augustine said: our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you O God. Jesus says, remain in me – without me no fruitfulness (John 15:1-5).

God invites us into the trinitarian relationship of ultimate love and community. A life that is in all its fulness – that satisfies our foundational human needs for love and security, significance, and purpose.

Paul sets up the two options for us. We can live according to our broken world's whims and feelings – the flesh he calls it, or according to God's original design, in relationship with God himself.

Firstly, the world's/sin's option. Paul describes the outward display (acts) of the inner self which are shaped by distancing ourselves from God, making ourselves gods and being, supposed, masters of our own destinies able to follow all the passions of what we think is our hearts – read Galatians 5:19-21.

Now, Heaven is not obtained by moral living – by being good. To the moral religious people Jesus said: ... *‘Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.* Matthew 21:31. But the ultimate fruit of rootedness in self, in promoting self as saviour and lord, and choosing our own path to happiness, is that you end up being a slave to, or worshipping, things. You invest, and root yourself in things, which might be good, but should not be god, for example, your health, your possessions, your relationships, and pleasure and experiences. And however good a person we are, we are not good enough. Ultimately, we all bring harm to others, to society, to creation, and after the flowers have gone the fruit that is seen is revealed in this list.

Some these things might initially appeal, having a somewhat naughty by nice allure to them, but this is an illusion – we might enjoy it at first, but imagine, if this described not your behaviour but that of your parent, your father, your spouse, child, neighbour or work colleague? Suddenly we view than in a different light.

Secondly, God presents for us a better way – see Galatians 5:22-23. By contrast to the fruit of the flesh, how would you feel, if this person was your parent (father), spouse, child, neighbour or work colleague?

So what kind of character do we want to be? Do we want to take on something of the character of God, to be like our heavenly Father and join in with the community and love of the Trinity? To be part of that which Jesus describes, read Matthew 13:31-32. We will be recognised by our fruit – see Matthew 7:16-20.

So how do we grow more fruitful in the Spirit? Jesus has this fruit in abundance and he loves us, he finds joy in us, he delights in us. Well, we have to stay close to Jesus! To know his love for you, and live in response to this love. A child will strive for their parent’s (father’s) approval, and love. How wonderful to be a child of a parent who just loves – unconditional love – receive his words of affirmation over us. Notice, Luke 3:22, Romans 8:15-17, and John 15:15.

When we admire and love someone one, we want to spend time with them – how about God? Spend time. Be nourished by his Word and Spirit, and the test of how well we are connecting is whether we’re producing fruit or thorns!

Trinity Sunday: *Almighty and everlasting God, you have given us your servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity and in the power of the divine majesty to worship the Unity: keep us steadfast in this faith, that we may evermore be defended from all adversities; 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: June 18th and July 16th at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: June 25th 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>