

17th November, 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.**

Hymn:

Man of sorrows Lamb of God
By His own betrayed
The sin of man and wrath of God
Has been on Jesus laid

Silent as He stood accused
Beaten mocked and scorned
Bowing to the Father's will
He took a crown of thorns

Oh that rugged cross my salvation
Where Your love poured out over me
Now my soul cries out hallelujah
Praise and honour unto Thee

Sent of heaven God's own Son
To purchase and redeem
And reconcile the very ones
Who nailed Him to that tree

Oh that rugged cross my salvation
Where Your love poured out over me
Now my soul cries out hallelujah
Praise and honour unto Thee

Now my debt is paid
It is paid in full
By the precious blood
That my Jesus spilled
Now the curse of sin
Has no hold on me
Whom the Son sets free
Oh is free indeed

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Oh that rugged cross my salvation
Where Your love poured out over me
Now my soul cries out hallelujah
Praise and honour unto Thee

See the stone is rolled away
Behold the empty tomb
Hallelujah God be praised
He's risen from the grave

Oh that rugged cross my salvation
Where Your love poured out over me
Now my soul cries out hallelujah
Praise and honour unto Thee
Praise and honour unto Thee.

The Sermon by Timothy James

Read Hebrews 10:19-25 and Mark 7:1-23 – Being clean

Between the two feeding miracles (6: 30-44 and 8: 1-10) comes another question of feeding, but this time not “how can these be fed?” but “who may eat?”

The Pharisees were the evangelicals of their day. They had a strong doctrine of election – they believed God had chosen Israel, and that obedience to the Torah was their response. In fact, they were so determined to obey it in full that they believed that, along with the written Law, Moses had been given an oral law, and that this had been passed down (as the “tradition of the elders”). They encouraged ordinary Jews to observe the strict standards of ritual purity as the priests in the Temple.

The purpose of such purity was to separate God's people from the nations around them and their pagan rulers, to make them ethnically exclusive and observably different.

My own upbringing included a lot of rules which are not contained in scripture, but which were designed to keep me well away from any risk of breaking God's law. When I am asked “are you religious?” I suppose I should say yes. Why else do I not buy tickets in charity raffles?

Of course, this admirable objective can produce perverse outcomes. We end up doing/not doing things because of religion. The Corban passage has the characteristics of a classic legal loophole.

How does Jesus respond?

First, he **tests tradition by scripture** (vv.6-13). This is a basic principle we need to follow. Isaiah and the other prophets constantly pointed how God “wants mercy, not sacrifice” (Hos. 6:6).

The most wonderful worship and distinctive lifestyle are no good to him if we do not understand, and follow, what his commands were for in the first place.

Do we test our traditions (personal, local, national) by God’s written word? When the Church of England was discussing the issue of same-sex marriage. (*Living in Love and Faith*), there were many responses, but the best were those who searched the scriptures for God’s word on the matter.

Where ought we to be doing this now?

Second, he takes them into **God’s intention**.

There is a principle of statutory interpretation in English law which states that the judge has to identify the “mischief”, i.e. the evil tendency which the law was created to remedy, before he applies it to the person in front of him.

Jesus makes it clear to his disciples (who are still struggling – v.18) that the purpose of the laws about purity and uncleanness is not to give us a way of putting a clear line between ourselves and outsiders. Rather, it is to give us a constant reminder – an acted parable – of the need to observe the moral purity which is central to God’s commands, and which challenges us because of our fallen human nature.

One of the problems with laws about outward observance is that it makes it easy for us to justify ourselves, like the Pharisee in the synagogue (Luke 18:9–14), and to blame our falls from grace on something outside us (Adam: “the woman tempted me” Gen. 3: 12).

Jesus does not say there is no such thing as defilement: it’s real, but it’s not contagious. That’s why he ate with sinners (2: 15-17). When challenged, he used the metaphor of disease, and said it is the sick that need a physician.

So what are the outward observances to which we give excessive attention, and what are things inside us which can come out and defile us?

2nd Sunday before Advent: Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son was revealed to destroy the works of the devil and to make us the children of God and heirs of eternal life: grant that we, having this hope, may purify ourselves even as he is pure; that when he shall appear in power and great glory we may be made like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom; where he 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: November 20th at 2pm in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Bowls: November 20th at 2pm in the Church.
- Coffee and Questions: November 27th at 10.30am in the Church Hall.
- December's Tea and Chat, Tea and Bowls and Coffee and Questions will join for a Christmas get-together on December 18th, 2pm to 5pm.
- Tea and Praise: 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.pariahofmedsteadandfourmarks.co.uk>