

19th April, 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:

See, what a morning, gloriously
bright,
with the dawning of hope in
Jerusalem;
folded the grave clothes, tomb filled
with light,
as the angels announce, 'Christ is
risen!'
See God's salvation plan, wrought
in love,
borne in pain, paid in sacrifice,
fulfilled in Christ, the man, for he
lives,
Christ is risen from the dead!

See Mary weeping: 'Where is he
laid?'
as in sorrow she turns from the
empty tomb;
hears a voice speaking, calling her
name:
it's the Master, the Lord raised to
life again!

The voice that spans the years,
speaking life,
stirring hope, bringing peace to us,
will sound till he appears, for he
lives,
Christ is risen from the dead!

One with the Father, Ancient of
Days,
through the Spirit who clothes faith
with certainty,
honour and blessing, glory and
praise
to the King crowned with power
and authority!
And we are raised with him, death
is dead,
love has won, Christ has conquered;
and we shall reign with him, for he
lives,
Christ is risen from the dead!.

The Sermon by Rev Howard Wright

Read James 1:1-8 and Matthew 5:1-12 – Living Joyfully

We begin a new series today looking at the book of James.

This letter, we feels like a sermon summary, is most likely written by James, the Lord's brother, known as, James of Jerusalem, as he led the church in Jerusalem. This James is mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:7 as witnessing the resurrection along with the apostles.

James write to the '12 tribes' the Israel of God, children of Abraham – the people of God in their fulness of which the church is the continuation. We are inheritors of the promises of God to his covenant people. (see Galatians 3: 7 & 6:16, Romans 4:11 & 16, see also 1 Peter 1:1-2.) And we are 'scattered' as this is no longer our 'home', but we are called to 'better place (Hebrews 11:13-16).

Through this letter, James calls us to family, to live as the family of God, taking on the family likeness, demonstrating the nature and character of our Heavenly Father, guided by His principles and Jesus' example.

True wisdom is found in the 'fear' of God – which here in James' practical sermon is shown as living with respect for the 'manufacturers' instructions. That is, living as we were designed to live – in communion with God and the rest of our family.

James begins his letter, with addressing our own foundation. Similarly, Paul charged the Ephesians church, 'Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.' (Acts 20:28). How can I be any help to others in following Jesus, if I am not following him myself?

James wants us to 'be mature and complete, not lacking anything.' (:4) – a great aspiration and hope, and an echo of Jesus' command: 'Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.' (Matthew 5:48)

So how are we to do this? Peter says we should not be surprised by difficulties, trials, and suffering, (1Peter 4:12). Jesus says we should expect them (John 16:33) and are blessed by persecution (Matthew 5:10-12). But James says we should find it 'pure joy'

The path to holiness is through a wilderness. Very little we learn in our lives is automatic, but it becomes automatic through repetition and hard work. This is true of anything we learn, any habit we develop. Think of some skill you learned – Driving a car, playing a musical instrument, writing! Learning, and developing habits is hard work.

For cooking and baking, milk has to be churned to make butter and cream has to be beaten to become solid and shapable for many of the uses we give it. For our

own lives, we learn patience through excruciating delayed gratification, we learn extravagant generosity when we have so little to share, we learn humility when we are overlooked and others take the credit, we learn to really love when faced with the unlovely, and so on.

We can grow through the ‘many kinds of trials’, and there are many! This world is broken and at times beastly – as we learnt this through Revelation – we need to develop deep faith, we rooted faith that will grow up in this real world, prior to God’s Kingdom full arrival.

James takes it for granted that we ‘know’ that trials produce perseverance, grit, and enable maturity – note how he returns to this theme in 5:7-8 & 10-11.

We are pursuing completeness – that we do ‘not lack anything.’ (v.4). James now says, ‘if you lack...’ (v.5) ask God.

We need wisdom – the ability to apply knowledge – to see things (trials) as God sees them – able to make decisions and plot the path ordained by God.

James assumes God will answer our prayer. In fact, ‘God answers all our prayers, as we would, if we knew all that he knows.’ It is God’s nature is to give good gifts – see Matthew 7:11. God gives generously, regardless of our faults! ‘Generously’ – the Greek word means in a focused, single-minded manner, which leads us to 1:6-8.

We need to ask, but we need to be single-minded, focussed, in our asking. Not attempting to keep a foot in each camp, but wholly committed to God’s way – all in. Jesus was all in with us – on the cross. Paul writes: Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:58) . Or, we will be unstable and insecure. If we are not secure in God, we are not secure.

So, we can grow in trials, in fact, we will mostly only grow through trials. We can ask God for wisdom – but do this with a clear single-minded focus. We can also count, [count it all joy] keeping an account, a record and reminder of the way God has kept through the trials so far.

There will be ‘hidden rocks’ in our lives, like the dead ends we spoke about at Easter. But God can redeem all things, remember, ‘God answers all our prayers, as we would, if we knew all that he knows’. He works all things together for our good according to his plan. (Romans 8:28)

So, in conclusion read Hebrew 12:1-3.

3rd Sunday of Easter: *Almighty Father, who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples with the sight of the risen Lord: give us such knowledge of his presence with us, that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life and serve you continually in righteousness and truth; 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: April 22nd and 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.pariahofmedsteadandfourmarks.co.uk>