

22nd 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:

Here is love, vast as the ocean,
Loving-kindness as the flood;
When the Prince of Life, my ransom,
Shed for me his precious blood.
Who his love will not remember?
Who can cease to sing his praise?
He shall never be forgotten,
Through Heav'n's everlasting days

Let me all your love accepting,
Love you, ever all my days;
Let me seek your kingdom only
And my life be to your praise;
You alone will be my glory,
Nothing in the world I see;
You have cleansed and sanctified me,
You have loved and set me free.

On the mount of crucifixion,
Fountains opened deep and wide,
Through the flood-gates of God's
mercy,
Flowed the vast and gracious tide;
Grace and love, like mighty rivers
Poured incessant from above,
And God's peace and perfect justice
Kissed a guilty world in love.

In your truth you will direct me
By your Spirit, thru' your Word;
And your grace my need is meeting,
As I trust in you, my Lord.
All your fulness you are pouring
From your endless wells above,
Without measure, full and boundless
As I yield myself in love.

The Sermon by Sarah Giles

Read Ephesians 5:8-20 and Matthew 7:15-23.

Visible Life

How can we produce good fruit and ensure our lives point to Jesus? What does that look like in practice in our workplaces, families and social lives?

What is good fruit?

The Ephesians passage repeatedly contrasts darkness and light. As followers of Jesus we are 'children of light', and that means our lives should be full of 'all goodness, righteousness and truth' (v9). For a more detailed picture of what that involves, Galatians 5:22–23 tells us that 'the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.'

How do we apply this to our everyday, messy lives? Do we choose goodness, righteousness, and truth, or self-interest, what we can get away with, and putting on a façade?

Jesus says, 'by their fruit you will recognise them' (Matthew 7:16, 20). So it's important to look for evidence of a person's character, and to ensure our own lifestyle reflects who we say we are.

How can we produce good fruit?

Consider the last time you had to make a decision about something that gave others information about your character. How did you arrive at your choice? How has your character been shaped by your previous choices? And how will this choice affect the next one?

Doing our best to listen to God and the choices he wants us to make is a daily, long-term commitment. God loves to work in our lives as we invest that time in discovering his character through repeated Bible reading and prayer, worship, and learning from each other. It's the Holy Spirit that produces good fruit in us as a result of our relationship with him.

The passage also talks about the uncovering of wrongdoing. This is important because our silence can be misinterpreted. If there is some kind of illegal or unethical practice going on in our place of work, we could be assumed to be complicit in that if we don't go through the proper procedures that are in place for raising a concern.

We need to be praying for wisdom about how to do this. Exposing wrongdoing does not necessarily mean being confrontational. There is still a place for gentleness and grace. There are biblical instructions for how to appropriately confront the wrongdoing of another Christian. In Matthew

18, Jesus says speak to them one to one to start with, and see if you can resolve it. If not, meet again with one or two other people, and if you still can't resolve it, then you should take it to the church. This model can be adapted to contexts outside the church as well.

How can we ensure our lives point to Jesus?

We could summarise this in just verses 15 and 16: 'be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity'. But what does it look like in practice to live wisely? James 3 spells it out:

'Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom... the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere' (James 3:13–17).

It's interesting that there is a specific instruction in the Ephesians passage to sing and make music to God (v19). Why is there an emphasis on music rather than other creative activities that can be used to honour God? I think there are a few reasons. One is that it's widely available: most people can make a 'joyful noise' without any specialised equipment. Another reason is that it's easily shareable. You can sing on your own, but you can also make it a communal activity very easily and that can be an encouragement to others. I have a third theory. Music can get stuck in your head, and you find yourself singing a chorus repeatedly for the next few days or weeks.

What are the Christian music earworms? Often they're children's songs. They're designed to get Bible stories and truths about the character of God stuck in the heads of young people. If you learn these songs as a child they tend to stay with you. So find Christian songs – or write your own – that stick in your mind and act as reminders in your walk with God. And share them!

Summary

We need to seek God's wisdom in our choices, our conversations, and how we spend our time. This means being deliberate in both spending time with God, so we learn to hear his voice, and spending time with other Christians, so we can encourage each other and keep each other accountable. When we live this way, our lives point to Jesus.

1st Sunday after Trinity: *O God, the strength of all those who put their trust in you, mercifully accept our prayers and, because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without you, grant us the help of your grace, that in the keeping of your commandments we may please you both in will and deed; 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: July 16th at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: June 25th and July 23rd 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>