

# 27<sup>th</sup> July, 2025

## 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:**

Lo! he comes with clouds descending,  
Once for favoured sinners slain!  
Thousand, thousand saints attending,  
Swell the triumph of his train.

Alleluia!

Alleluia!

Alleluia!

God appears on Earth to reign.

Every eye shall now behold him,  
Robed in dreadful majesty;  
Those who set at naught and sold him,  
Pierced and nailed him to a tree,  
Deeply wailing,  
Deeply wailing,  
Deeply wailing,  
Shall the true Messiah see.

The dear tokens of his passion  
Still his dazzling body bears,  
Cause of endless exultation  
To his ransomed worshipers;  
With what rapture,  
With what rapture,  
With what rapture  
Gaze we on those glorious scars.

Yea! Amen! let all adore thee  
High on thine eternal throne!  
Savior, take the power and glory,  
Claim the kingdom for thine own.  
Alleluia!  
Alleluia!  
Alleluia!  
Everlasting God come down.

## The Sermon by Timothy James.

### Read Psalm 97 and Luke 1:46-55 – The Lord Reigns

Psalm 97 begins with a bold declaration of truth: **“The Lord reigns!”**. In a world full of uncertainty and shifting appearances, this psalm does not invite us to *feel* our way to faith, but to *see* reality through the lens of divine kingship. Faith begins not with perception, but with praise.

The psalm reads like a royal proclamation. Its truth does not depend on human agreement. It is not a proposal for debate, nor the expression of a tribe’s private devotion. This is a public, global, and present reality: God is King, not just of “us,” but of all nations, whether they acknowledge Him or not.

This reign is not like that of earthly rulers, who rise to power by birth, conquest, or politics. Psalm 97 reveals a rule grounded in **righteousness** and **justice**; not arbitrary power, but moral order. These are not secondary attributes of God’s rule; they are the very foundation of His throne. Unlike unjust authorities, God does not merely wield power; He reigns *rightly*, and calls all creation into the joy and discipline of His rule.

This is commanding language: God declares His rule, not to suggest or inform, but to call forth a response: rejoicing, trembling, allegiance, and moral discernment. But it is also covenantal language. This Psalm is not only a call to reverence, it is an invitation to **relationship**. This King does not simply reign from afar, though his glory is manifest in creation (vv.4–5), his truth is made known through justice (v.2), and his power is seen in the fall of idols (v.7). He speaks not merely to command, but to *draw near*. As J. I. Packer puts it, “God speaks to initiate fellowship.” The purpose of divine kingship is not fear, but communion.

This is why the ethical turn in verse 10 is so crucial: *“You who **love** the Lord, hate evil.”* God’s self-disclosure is both **personal** – He wants to be known as He is – and **moral** – He reveals His justice to draw us into His

likeness. Moral life is not a burden but a response to love; it is how allegiance to, and love for, the King is shown.

The New Testament deepens this vision. The **Magnificat** in Luke 1 mirrors Psalm 97: both proclaim God's justice not just for the few, but for all peoples and generations. They both imagine a world reordered under God's rule, where the proud fall and the humble are lifted. In **Mark 1:15**, which we were reading last September, Jesus announces that the kingdom of God has come near, fulfilling what Psalm 97 long declared. And in **Philippians 2**, which we studied last May, it is proclaimed that this reign will one day be fully acknowledged by every creature.

So how should we respond? Psalm 97 calls us to ***rejoice***, like Mary did, because God's justice is not just a dream but a dawning reality. It calls us to ***resist evil***, not only personally, but in our world: to oppose injustice, idolatry, and deceit. And it calls us to ***proclaim His kingship*** publicly—not hiding faith away, but declaring God's reign with conviction and hope.

We live between the psalm's proclamation and its final fulfilment, trusting that the day is coming when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ (Revelation 11:15).

**6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity:** *Merciful God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as pass our understanding: pour into our hearts such love toward you that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; 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: August 20<sup>th</sup> at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: August 27<sup>th</sup> 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>