

30th August, 2026

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:

O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
vast, unmeasured, boundless, free,
rolling as a mighty ocean
in its fullness over me.

Underneath me, all around me,
is the current of Thy love;
leading onward, leading homeward
to Thy glorious rest above.

O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
spread His praise from shore to
shore!

How He loveth, ever loveth,
changeth never, nevermore!

How He watcheth o'er His loved
ones,
died to call them all His own;
how for them He intercedeth,
watcheth o'er them from the
throne.

O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
love of every love the best;
'tis an ocean vast of blessing,
'tis a haven sweet of rest.

O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
'tis heav'n of heav'ns to me;
and it lifts me up to glory,
for it lifts me up to Thee.

The Sermon by

Read Psalm 115:1-18, Matthew 17:1-8 – Glory

Psalm 115 it begins ... ***Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.***

In a way isn't that odd? It is none of the standard opening types of Psalms— not a cry out, not a call to praise, not a beatitude, not a wisdom observation, not a historical narrative.

It is something more unusual: a **self-renunciation**, a reminding themselves that they were chosen for Gods Glory not their own. It is enlightened by v2:

Why do the nations say, "Where is their God?"

And going through the first part of the psalm (v 1-8) it is remarkable (not unique) in what isn't said here – is NO 'This is the God that delivered us from Egypt'. No 'this is the god that gave us the land of Caanan' in this psalm. No: God is renowned in Judah; in Israel his name is great. His tent is in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion.

God who is very present, and who acts **isn't being** recalled here. God is still God, make no mistake; He is in his heaven. But ... it seems he isn't helping his people NOW

Making sense of it in its own context - it is highly possible that this part of the psalm was written in, or in close memory of, the Babylonian Exile – the imagery of many idols being paraded around is striking, and the mockery of the Jewish people for worshipping a God who had failed to save them would make sense.

This may be an insight for us in our times, in our situations. This feeling of a distant God can be real for us at times. Of non-Christians putting us down, or putting the church, down, (Howard talked about this in an earlier sermon). Of people looking at us in our difficulty: be it family difficulties, workplace, finance, health-wise etc and asking, "Where is your God now?".

This passage speaks OF a people who know God is in heaven, but don't see him acting. People who see ridiculous idols (material or otherwise) paraded around in triumph and can only watch. Who see themselves disadvantaged or looked down on for their faith.

So then, I think that this psalm speaks to anyone today who feels displaced or out of place in this world, this country, in any place or group because of their faith. Particularly if God seems distant and not active.

If that feels like you then please start by taking verses 1-8 as your inspiration. Read it again slowly in your own time, maybe see:

First, you were called by and to Jesus for God's glory, not your own, I know that's a bit tough as a starter, and it might need circling back to after you have reflected that:

Second, Our God is in heaven not IN a human made artefact.

Third, our God does have a mouth to speak, does have ears to hear, does have hands to feel, to hold, to wipe away tears – that was Jesus, remember.

And the remainder of the psalm is a help too, but I split it apart as I feel its tone changes, I think – and maybe its place in their history shifts too – ask me about that afterwards if you wish?

But starting at v9: All you Israelites, trust in the Lord — he is their help and shield.

Has that ever struck you as a somewhat awkward construction? Is anyone puzzled by it, would anyone like, maybe to just ‘correct the grammar’?

I think it makes perfect sense though, and in an important way, would you on me in an exercise to explore why?

***⁹ All you Israelites, trust in the Lord—
he is their help and shield.***

***¹⁰ House of Aaron, trust in the Lord—
he is their help and shield.***

***¹¹ You who fear him, trust in the Lord—
he is their help and shield.***

***¹² The Lord remembers us and will bless us:
He will bless his people Israel,
he will bless the house of Aaron,
¹³ he will bless those who fear the Lord—
small and great alike.***

This sort of call and response is called antiphonal it is intended for more than a single person to read or perform. So, the remainder of this psalm is more than just a written reminder in a book (or on a fridge magnet). ... it is a performative act in a supportive community, there a real power in the shift of person – the church, the congregation, the cell group affirming aloud to each other the blessing, the help, the shield that our God will be.

I believe this second half can also help us when we are struggling in an alien place, when the world mocks, when our beliefs are disadvantaged, and when God seems distant in his heaven – but only a small percentage of the value of this part of the psalm as an encouragement will come from reading it, much more from being in a community whether these words are acted by the community.

Let me conclude ...

I feel this Psalm was written for a downtrodden and disadvantaged people, and it can speak to the same today. The first half is maybe more help in a personally reflective way – to be studied, prayed over, dwelt in.

The second half complements it, without the triumphalism and celebration of a God who has yet delivered, it is a communal, congregational, enacted affirmation of the belief and hope that He will.

If you're struggling in the ways I've described here ... please use this psalm personally as inspiration and reminder, and seek out, call out to, involve yourself in and BE that community that actively , vocally, practically supports each other in tough times and good.

Let me finish by quoting another two lines:

¹⁴ ***May the Lord cause you to flourish,
both you and your children.***

¹⁵ ***May you be blessed by the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.***

13th Sunday after Trinity: Almighty God, who called your Church to bear witness that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself: help us to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may be drawn to you; through him who was lifted up on the cross, 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: September 16th at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: September 23rd at 10.30am in Church Hall.
- Harvest Tea & Praise: Sunday, 4 October 3:00 – 4:30pm in Church.
- 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>