

2nd March, 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:

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
Bowling 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

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 Rev Howard Wright

Read Isaiah 5:1-7, Mark 12:1-12 – Being Prophetic

Today's passage is presented as the Tuesday after Palm Sunday, and the day after Jesus cleansed the temple. Jesus has been challenged about his authority about his behaviour, and after giving an answer he tells this parable.

The Jews were familiar with the prophecy that we read from Isaiah today. They know that God is the land-owner, and that they are the tenants. They understood that Jesus was saying they had murdered the prophets (the 'servants'). And that they would murder the Messiah (God's anointed, the 'son'). And they could see that he's saying that they are to be judged (death), resulting in the Kingdom being passed to others!

And this is what has happened. Simplistically, Judaism was about the 3 Ts, Torah (law), Territory, and Temple. The Bible indicates that God has not finished with the Jews, but this is now a New Covenant/Testament. There is a new 'law' (Torah) of grace, a new global Territory, and new Temple-hearted disciples, the Church, people indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

The people of Israel have been removed from their role. And Christ is now, in so many ways, in the central place as the testimony to God. (See Mark 10:10-11) This quote from Psalm 118 was initially speaking of king David. David was the rejected stone, who ultimately became Israel's capstone, it's greatest king. Now Jesus comes as a descendant of David, the true heir to David's throne.

Three things to notice:

Firstly, God shows extraordinary patience to the 'tenants'. God gave the people of Israel a law (Torah) to live by, a land to live in (Territory) and a relationship to flourish in (of which the temple was a sign). But God's chosen people were simply stewards of all this, it was not theirs, God was not theirs, they belonged to him. They held all this in trust, but sadly proved themselves untrustworthy.

God was so patient – Abraham lived around 2,000BC, and for 100s of years God sent prophets to encourage and challenge the people to be loyal to God. Though there were moments of enthusiasm and obedience, and individuals who stayed true, for the most part it's a history of failure.

God is patient with us, read 2 Peter 3:8-9. And he seeks to win us with love: *God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?* (Romans 2:4).

The people of Israel failed to respond, they didn't want God, they wanted to be God of themselves. What about us as the people of God? Do we behave as though we belong to ourselves, or worse, that somehow God owes us, or that we own Him. As Paul writes, '*You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies.*' (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Secondly, God requires his 'share'. He holds the 'tenants' accountable, and they are killed. All people are owned by God, our very being depends upon him. This is his body and mind, they are gifts from him. The resources I need are his in the first place. I am responsible to him for how I use his gifts, including my impact upon the rest of his creation, and not least, other people. I am answerable to him! Read Hebrews 9:27-28.

Note how Jesus spoke about the seriousness of judgment and Hell in Mark 9: 42-49. So serious was the consequence of our separation from God that Jesus was prepared to be tortured and suffer and excruciating death, that we could somehow judgement and hell.

The teachers of the law lived an seemingly exemplary life, they were the good people, but they were not good enough – none of us is! See Romans 3:23. But note, though 'the wages of sin is death, ... the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.' (Romans 6:23). Jesus has made a way.

God doesn't move. How absurd that the religious leaders thought they had the authority over God! How absurd that we think we own ourselves, and are accountable to no one.

Thirdly, God seeks Fruitfulness: It's relationship with God that the people of Israel missed out on – how can we cultivate this relationship producing fruit?

We start Lent this week. I'm nervous of making a thing about one season which should be all year round. Like the dog that's not just for Christmas. But consider the practice of 'Examen', taking a moment each to take stock. So, think about taking time this Lent to measure your fruitfulness. Perhaps read one of the following in an evening and reflect on the day: Fruit of the Spirit – Galatians 5; Beatitudes – Matthew 5; 10 Commandments – Exodus 20; Lord's Prayer – Matthew 6.

And, finally, it's the kindness of God that leads us to repentance, so, how can we show this kindness to others this week – and love our neighbour as ourselves.

Sunday Next before Lent: Almighty Father, whose Son was revealed in majesty before he suffered death upon the cross: give us grace to perceive his glory, that we may be strengthened to suffer with him and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory; 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: March 19th at 2pm in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Bowls: March 19th at 2pm in the Church.
- Coffee and Questions: March 26th at 10.30 in the Church Hall.
- Easter Tea & Praise: Sunday 6th April, 3pm.
- 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>