

# 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 2024

## 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.**

### **Song:**

The love of God is greater far  
than tongue or pen can ever tell;  
it goes beyond the highest star,  
and reaches to the lowest hell.  
The wandering child is reconciled  
by God's beloved Son.  
The aching soul again made whole,  
and priceless pardon won.

O love of God, how rich and pure!  
How measureless and strong!  
It shall forevermore endure—  
the saints' and angels' song.

When ancient time shall pass away,  
and human thrones and kingdoms fall;  
when those who here refuse to pray  
on rocks and hills and mountains call;  
God's love so sure, shall still endure,  
all measureless and strong;  
grace will resound the whole earth  
round —

the saints' and angels' song.

O love of God, how rich and pure!  
How measureless and strong!  
It shall forevermore endure—  
the saints' and angels' song.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,  
and were the skies of parchment  
made;  
were every stalk on earth a quill,  
and everyone a scribe by trade;  
to write the love of God above  
would drain the ocean dry;  
nor could the scroll contain the whole,  
though stretched from sky to sky.

O love of God, how rich and pure!  
How measureless and strong!  
It shall forevermore endure—  
the saints' and angels' song.

## **The Sermon by Rev. Howard Wright**

### **Living for Christ Forever.**

#### **Read Philippians 1:18b-30 and John 14:1-7.**

It's important to study scripture, how else are we going to learn and grow. The early disciples (Acts 2:42) '*devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching*' and so should we.

In today's passage we see how the Gospel is a win-win for Paul and for us. Paul is conflicted. Like the 1980s punk rock band The Clash – 'should I stay or should I go?' But he views both options as a win. *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. (:21).* We are going to look at these two options in reverse. So, should I go or should I stay!

#### **To die is gain**

Paul is not seeking death, as he makes clear, read 2 Corinthians 1:8-11. And neither is he unaware of the terrible pain in loss. He himself, in this letter talks about being spared 'sorrow upon sorrow' (v.23), when Epaphroditus recovered from a near death illness. So, what does this mean?

That death is not the end, but the beginning of the great adventure with God, as it was supposed to be. There is a place of no more tears or suffering, (see Revelation 21:1-4) with everything in its right place – '*all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well,*' as Julian of Norwich put it. And as C. S. Lewis expressed in *The Great Divorce*, it will be like moving from Black and White to technicolour. To translate Paul's words, 'to be with Messiah King this is the best.' Paul is excited to be face to face (1 Corinthians 13:11-12) with his Saviour, Lord, Friend, and Brother.

Jesus has prepared a place – he is the way to that place. (John 14:1-7) and this is a real physical existence, with love, security, and purpose. It is massive win, and no-one can snatch it from us. We can live with confidence, God has got our future and it is secure. No economic disaster, war, election, bully, disease, or anything else, can rob us of this hope and certainty.

## **To live, is to live with, and for, Jesus.**

God has given himself, in Christ for us, and Paul recognises this act of grace and responds with all he is to follow Jesus. He has a relationship with Jesus – his Saviour, Lord, friend, and brother. And this relationship is so close, that God lives in him – the Spirit of Christ, who brings his comfort and encouragement.

Paul now lives in response to God's love. Why would you want to do anything else but follow the God who loves us and living a life 'worthy of the gospel of Christ.' The Philippians were called to live as citizens of the Gospel (in a Roman city) where Roman citizenship was so highly prized.

We are to ensure our behaviour matches the glorious good news of gospel. We are to be people characterised by love. *'...love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.'* (John 13:34-35). And displaying *'... the fruit of the Spirit [which] is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.'* (Galatians 5:22-23)

It's not our Sunday stuff that shows us to be Christians, but our Monday to Sunday behaviour, conversations, treatment of others, spending habits, and attitudes, in other words our love!

## **To live like this is to be different.**

You have the privilege to believe and be able to suffer for him. <sup>29</sup> *For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, ...'* There is a new king, just, not everyone realises this yet. And we are called to hold our nerve, and live differently.

To have God's view on, for example: revenge and retaliation, both as individuals and nations, on sexual behaviour and marriage, and on expenditure and investments. When we call Jesus Lord, it means a radical departure from the ways of 'the world.' It will involve 'suffering'. Read Romans 8:16-18. But our prayers and the prayers of others, and The Spirit will encourage us. And because of this, we rejoice!

**1<sup>st</sup> 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: June 19<sup>th</sup> at 2pm in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Bowls: June 19<sup>th</sup> at 2pm in the Church.
- Coffee and Questions: June 26<sup>th</sup> at 10.30am in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise: 3pm Sunday, TBA
- 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>