

# 7<sup>th</sup> July, 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:**

'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,  
and to take him at his word;  
just to rest upon his promise,  
and to know, "Thus saith the Lord."

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him!  
How I've proved him o'er and o'er!  
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!  
O for grace to trust him more!

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him!  
How I've proved him o'er and o'er!  
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!  
O for grace to trust him more!

Yes, 'tis sweet to trust in Jesus,  
just from sin and self to cease;  
just from Jesus simply taking  
life and rest, and joy and peace.

O how sweet to trust in Jesus,  
just to trust his cleansing blood;  
and in simple faith to plunge me  
neath the healing, cleansing flood!

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him!  
How I've proved him o'er and o'er!  
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!  
O for grace to trust him more!.

## **The Sermon by Robert Hughes**

### **Ambitious for Jesus: Read Philippians 3:7-9 and John 1:29-34**

We know these two men, Paul and John, wrote what we read today looking back in their later years. They have come to realise nothing they could have done would have changed a thing, altered the course of history. It is humbling to see that once we have been opened to receive Jesus' gifts, we cannot add or subtract anything to or from them. They come complete.

In John 19 v30, John speaks of Jesus' final cry from the Cross "Maselem", an Aramaic word which means "It is finished", done. It's a cry with great spiritual significance for John, the youngest and most impressionable of the Apostles. For it seemed to him to summon Jewish history back into the present, when the high priest would announce to the people that the sacrifice to God had been made - the 'gift' given and received, the debt paid in full - "Maselem!"

But, as you might have seen from your own experience that receipt of a gift can bring with it a sense of indebtedness, of obligation. Even if the giver asks nothing in return, we can feel beholden. And that sense of now owing something can be unwelcome. (The French philosopher, Jacques Derrida, was good at explaining those feelings).

Yet neither Paul nor John are writing here about indebtedness; they want to convey their deep sense of certainty, their feelings of reciprocity towards Jesus, a warmth that extends through him to everyone else in their lives. 'Being' for him far exceeds 'doing' for him. They know the pleasure it gives him to see his 'gifts' used - and, conversely, his sorrow when they are un-used.

But we all need different gifts to complete us. John and Paul were born to very different circumstances; the rustic John, forthright Apostle son of a businessman is a fisherman, used to steering by 'sixth sense'; but the urbane and 'needy' lawyer, Paul, is a quick witted man of the world, navigating legalities by day and self-doubts by night. John's relationship is with nature. He reads signs hidden from the rest of us. He must trust his instincts. Paul is an adept in the tricky world of social and religious politics, a man who craves recognition. They are dissimilar.

The Paul of Philippians 3:4b-6, reflects that: Whoever thinks they had reason for confidence in themselves, he had even more. As an authentic Jewish believer, a Hebrew among Hebrews, he had been a recognised legal expert, a zealous persecutor of non-conformists; a faultless judge of right and wrong.

Yet, he doesn't think so now; and, like John, uses the same words to tell how Jesus brought them new understanding of themselves, their needs, qualities, and places in the world. So are we Jesus' missionaries or are we ourselves his mission? What is the place of our ambitions in this story?

I referred earlier to Jesus' last word "Maselem" [Aramaic], meaning "It is finished (done)." And I said Maselem might also mean 'the debt is now repaid'.

When Howard spoke to us on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, a part of his message was: "Christ has given all for me, so I want to give my all for him. That's the kind of relationship we have". Howard's sense of debt came powerfully across to me. It's exactly how I feel, ... .. though I hasten to say I fall a very long way short of 'paying back'.

At this stage of my life, though I know with certainty I am forgiven, the memory of past wrongs comes back strongly from time to time. And I mourn the time I spoiled, the waste and the hurts along my path. But I see more vividly today the contrast between my 'then' and my 'now', and the scale of that change fills me with awe. I am thankful, yet that word doesn't cover it.

Since he came into my world I've seen the transformation of my life as 'the mission', rather than myself as the missionary. I mean that I know when I am honouring the gifts Jesus has given me - I can see the effect of those gifts when I use them for the benefit of others - when I want to bring hope and encouragement. But the opposite is also true; I see when I disappoint - which is too often! And I believe what I say about myself probably holds just as true for each one of you. We are works in progress - not yet complete.

In 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul speaks of transformation using the present tense: Our continuing transformation shows in our faces, reflecting God's increasing glory.

Last Sunday, David Giles gave us a saying from Uganda: 'One who sees good must narrate it.' And surely, when we affirm the goodness we see in others - as long as it is the truth - we can help those around us to see themselves in a new and more positive light. My advancing years have shown me that encouragement is the first and most important step to hope.

Astonishingly, however, few of us actually think of relationship with Jesus in terms of his effect upon our attitudes and behaviour - though surely that's the point. Isn't it obvious that when we behave with love towards one another we invite peace and harmony into this world, which advertises the life to come for those who accept his gift?

"Mashalem", Jesus said, "it is done" ... "I am given to you; you have me!" The living proof that he has been received is a life transformed - a life that's become the message itself, the good news.

Today I am to tell you how beautiful we are in His eyes when we reveal His likeness to others with our lives ... and to tell you how miserable He is when that light in us is eclipsed; when the words flowing from our mouths lack kindness and truth; when our eyes are closed to justice, when we do not shine with his goodness.

Worship in your beauty, then, the dearest friend that changed you and the God that made you, for they are One.

**6th 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: July 17<sup>th</sup> at 2pm in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Bowls: July 17<sup>th</sup> at 2pm in the Church.
- Coffee and Questions: July 24<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.parishofmedsteadandfourmarks.co.uk>