

9th 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:

Jesus, keep me near the cross,
There a precious fountain;
Free to all, a healing stream,
Flows from Calvary's mountain.

In the cross, in the cross
Be my glory ever,
Till my ransomed soul shall find
Rest beyond the river.

Near the cross, a trembling soul,
Love and mercy found me;
There the Bright and Morning Star
Shed His beams around me.

In the cross, in the cross
Be my glory ever,

Till my ransomed soul shall find
Rest beyond the river.

Near the cross! O lamb of God,
Bring its scenes before me;
Help me walk from day to day
With its shadow o'er me.

Near the cross! I'll watch and wait,
Hoping, trusting ever;
Till I reach the golden strand,
Just beyond the river.

In the cross, in the cross
Be my glory ever,
Till my ransomed soul shall find
Rest beyond the river.

The Sermon by Timothy James

Read Philippians 2:1-11 and John 15:1-8

Being like Jesus

This sermon is backwards: application first, exposition afterwards.

The issue it deals with is that the recent merger of our parishes raises concerns among the different congregations that cherished traditions will be lost. This can lead to disunity: fear or resentment on one hand, insensitivity, impatience, or simply obliviousness on the other.

What does God's word say about this issue?

At one level it appears simple: v.4 of our epistle says we should each look not to our own interests but to the interests of others; and v.2 that we should be of the same mind, and in full accord.

So presumably we should take steps to reassure any who are concerned, and all of us should go back to the roots of our forms of worship and make sure they are fulfilling the purposes for which they were created in their full richness.

But how can we have the same mind?

The epistle is again clear: we can have the same mind only by having the mind of Christ. Paul "appropriates Christ... as a model for relationships among members of the Philippian church" and we must appropriate the same model for relationships among members of our church and parish.

How? Not by our efforts. It comes (v.1) from the activity of God in all his persons: the encouragement we receive from Christ; the consolation from love (and who is love but God?); and the *partnership* in the Spirit.

To go back to the issue of forms of worship, Acts 2, which we were reading a couple of weeks ago at Pentecost, shows that the coming of the Spirit caused the believers to "devote themselves to the apostles' teaching and *fellowship*, to the breaking of bread and the prayers". If this sounds exactly like what our liturgy, in all its forms, is intended to look like, that

isn't a coincidence. Its object is to bring our minds in line with the mind of Christ.

If we truly respond to God's work in and among us, if we take advantage of his resources by devoting ourselves to the teaching of the Bible and *fellowship*, to the breaking of bread and the prayers, then the outcome ought to look remarkably like vv.3&4 of our reading.

That will be the outcome because of what Jesus did in the 3 act drama of the incarnation described in vv.6-11. He was in the highest place, but he allowed himself to take the lowest place. If this is how Jesus acted, how should we, who acknowledge him as our Lord, act? Well, vv.3&4 would seem to provide some pointers!

Like-mindedness among worshippers at St Andrews and the Church of the Good Shepherd will not come from our having the same habits, tastes or opinions (we don't). Fortunately, "having the same mind" does not mean "100% agreement on every issue". It comes from Christ-likeness, which includes willingness to humble ourselves as he did.

How this will be attained in practice remains to be worked out between us in the Spirit's power and following Christ's example.

2nd Sunday after Trinity: Lord, you have taught us that all our doings without love are nothing worth: send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love, the true bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whoever lives is counted dead before you. Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake, 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 19th at 2pm in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Bowls: June 19th at 2pm in the Church.
- Coffee and Questions: June 26th 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>