

# 16<sup>th</sup> February, 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:**

Not to us be glory given  
but to him who reigns above:  
Glory to the God of heaven  
for his faithfulness and love!  
What though unbelieving voices  
hear no word and see no sign,  
still in God my heart rejoices,  
working out his will divine.

Not what human fingers fashion,  
gold and silver, deaf and blind,  
dead to knowledge and  
compassion,  
having neither heart nor mind,  
lifeless gods, yet some adore them,  
nerveless hands and feet of clay;  
all become, who bow before them,  
lost indeed, and dead as they.

Not in them is hope of blessing,  
hope is in the living Lord:  
high and low, his name confessing,  
find in him their shield and sword.  
Hope of all whose hearts revere  
him,  
God of Israel, still the same!  
God of Aaron! Those who fear him,  
he remembers them by name.

Not the dead, but we the living  
praise the Lord with all our powers;  
of his goodness freely giving,  
his is heaven; earth is ours.  
Not to us be glory given  
but to him who reigns above:  
Glory to the God of heaven,  
for his faithfulness and love!

## The Sermon by Timothy James.

### Read Isaiah 42:1-7 Mark, 10:32-52 – Being Great

We are reaching the end of Act II of Mark's gospel. The first eight chapters led up to the answer to the question "who is Jesus?", expressed by Peter at 8:29 with "You are the Messiah". Chapters 9-13 have been addressing the question "what has Jesus come to do?", and repeatedly Jesus teaches that the answer is "to die".

These chapters include a repetition of three events: Jesus predicts his death (8:31, 9:31, 10:33); the disciples misunderstand what discipleship means (8:32-33, 9:32-34, 10:35-41); and Jesus teaches what it really means. Our reading today is the third time this has happened.

When Jesus says (vv.32-34), in greater detail than before, what is going to happen to him, we are not shocked, because we have read the story and know how it ends. But the disciples are shocked, disturbed and afraid (v.32).

On the other hand, the brothers' request probably does shock us, because it is so blatantly self-serving. We have been taught to see this sort of overt ambition as wrong. We are offended by the suspicion that politicians and others who say they want office and position in order to serve are actually motivated by ambition and a desire for power and privilege. Sure, our secular value system requires people to be hypocritical and disguise their ambition, but James and John are only "networking" after all. They have Jesus on their LinkedIn network, so to speak, and they are just asking for a recommendation.

Despite Jesus' rebukes, and his teaching about taking up one's cross (8:34-37) and being servant of all (9:35-36), James and John are still fantasizing about coming glory and scheming for positions of privilege. They have heard Jesus' words, but they have the music all wrong. They still dance to the world's tune.

So their request shows their misunderstanding of their calling to be disciples. As Lamar Williamson writes, *"They have understood neither that he must suffer nor that they must."*

Then we are told of the healing of Bartimaeus. This part of the gospel started with the healing of a healing blind man (at 8:22-25), and it finishes with another.

Jesus asks him the same question he asked James and John: “What do you want me to do for you?”. The answer is simple: “I want to see”.

And the outcome is that he followed Jesus in the way (v.52).

This acts as a parable of the disciples’ blindness, which Jesus is still trying to heal. As Lamar Williamson puts it, *“The text is an invitation to come to Jesus and so to see; to see and so to follow Jesus. ... The healing of Bartimaeus is testimony to the power of Jesus to restore those who know they are blind.”* This may include disciples who have been following Jesus for a long time, perhaps many years.

Following Jesus is not a no-risk offer: discipleship will mean more trouble, not less, because the way we live will challenge our culture’s value system – “Not so with you” (v.43). So if we set out to follow Jesus without fear and trembling, Mark is telling us we have not understood true discipleship. But he proposes the imitation of Christ as a pattern for discipleship. Discipleship means a life of service.

The climax of this discipleship section of this Gospel is v.45: “Even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”. And Jesus’ invitation to his disciples is to be like him.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday before Lent:** Almighty God, who alone can bring order to the unruly wills and passions of sinful humanity: give your people grace so to love what you command and to desire what you promise, that, among the many changes of this world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; 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: February 19<sup>th</sup> at 2pm in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Bowls: February 19<sup>th</sup> at 2pm in the Church.
- Coffee and Questions: February 26<sup>th</sup> at 10.30 in the Church Hall.
- 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>