

16th August, 2026

The paper-version Service



St Andrew's
Church



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks
Responding to God's Love



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:

Come, thou Fount of every blessing;
tune my heart to sing thy grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing,
call for songs of loudest praise.

Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above;
praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,
mount of God's unchanging love!

Here I raise my Ebenezer;
hither by thy help I'm come;
and I hope, by thy good pleasure,
safely to arrive at home.

Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God;

he, to rescue me from danger,
interposed his precious blood.

Come, thou Fount of every blessing;
tune my heart to sing thy grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing,
call for songs of loudest praise.

O to grace how great a debtor
daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace now, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to thee.

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love;
here's my heart; O take and seal it;
seal it for thy courts above.

The Sermon by Rev. Howard Wright

Read Psalm 109:1-31 Matthew, 13:24-30 – Speak

The Psalms give voice to our prayers. They lead us in, and model for us, praise, lament, and complaint. God is big and beautiful enough to receive all praise. He is also big and merciful enough to receive all our concerns, fears, and worries. Today's psalm, 109, is known as an 'imprecatory' psalm. The word imprecatory meaning, expressing or invoking curses, evil, or divine judgment upon someone.

This psalm's language and expressed hopes contrast with Jesus' teaching, or maybe better, they are amplified to their proper place by Jesus' teaching.

The psalm is given as 'of David', and we'll assume him as author, though it could mean, 'after' as in, 'in the style of'. Either way, David certainly had experiences which could have given rise to this depth of anguish and complaint.

The Psalm begins with a request and presentation of the concern from David's perspective (vs.1-5). David is anxious that God appears silent in the face of baseless persecution from those with whom David had an allegiance. These slanders had betrayed his friendship, though he had prayed for them (v.4) and turned against him.

And so David requests God responds bringing disaster upon those who wished it upon him (vs.6-20). The list is pretty extensive and detailed. This is a demand for justice on a grand scale – the better word might be, vengeance.

The Psalm moves to a confident plea for God's help (v.21) and a further statement of need, and a desire that God's deeds would be known and seen (vs.22-28). The psalm concludes summing up with a confidence in God's salvation and a promise to respond in praise, to some extent, regardless of the outcome (vs.29-31).

So, what can we learn?

Firstly, this psalm is an honest cry in response to hurt and God is big enough to cope with the cries of our heart and make sense of them. So in our prayers let's be honest with our varying emotions. There is no pretending necessary or possible before God. Prayer is about bringing our whole selves into the presence of God.

Secondly, we need to remember the whole story of Scripture and the whole work of Jesus. Martin reminded us last week, the New [Testament] is in the Old concealed, the Old is in the New revealed. So there are some

things from this side of the cross that we can note: Romans 8 reminds us that if God stands for us nothing can stand against us. Romans 12:19-20 reminds us that, as David does, we are to leave any judgment to God. It is not for us to deliver this, we are to trust God to act for us, as he deems best. Additionally, this psalm has a prophetic forward-looking aspect. It reflects Jesus who faced the worst betrayal. (It is even quoted by Peter, regarding replacing the leadership of Judas (Acts 1:20)).

The cross, resurrection, and victorious return of Jesus shapes how we respond to pain caused by others and ultimately Jesus calls on us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:43-48)

So, what are we to do in pain?

Firstly, be honest with God. Bring your anger, fear, grief and frustration to him. Nothing we say in prayer will surprise him.

Secondly, recognise who our real battle is against (Read Ephesians 6:10-20) and stand firm in Christ.

Thirdly, pray for our enemies, those who attack as individuals and those who stand against the church. Jesus loved his enemies, and prayed for those who crucified him. This does not mean pretending that evil is acceptable or that injustice does not matter. It means refusing to allow hatred to have the final word in our hearts.

Fourthly, pray against the work of the evil one, and for protection over the vulnerable.

And, finally, pray also for those suffering in nations where persecution is a daily reality and holds very real danger.

Psalm 109, shaped by the cross gives us permission to bring our deepest pain before God. To be honest without becoming hateful. To seek justice without taking vengeance. To resist evil without treating people as our ultimate enemy. To pray for those who hurt us while still asking God to stop their wrongdoing. And to trust that God's justice and mercy are greater than anything we could accomplish ourselves.

When do not carry our pain alone. We can bring it to the God who hears, the God who judges justly, and the God who, in Christ, has shown us the way of love. Therefore like David, we can finish where the Psalm finishes: trusting in God and giving him praise.

11th Sunday after Trinity: O God, you declare your almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity: mercifully grant to us such a measure of your grace, that we, running the way of your commandments, may receive your gracious promises, and be made partakers of your heavenly treasure; 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. 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 and Bowls: August 19th & September 16th at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: August 26th at 10.30am in 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.parishofmedsteadandfourmarks.co.uk>