

# 17<sup>th</sup> May, 2026

## 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:**

I hear the Saviour say,  
"Thy strength indeed is small,  
Child of weakness, watch and pray,  
Find in me thine all in all."

Jesus paid it all,  
All to Him I owe;  
Sin had left a crimson stain,  
He washed it white as snow.

Lord, now indeed I find  
Thy power and Thine alone,  
Can change the leper's spots  
And melt the heart of stone.

Jesus paid it all,  
All to Him I owe;  
Sin had left a crimson stain,  
He washed it white as snow.

For nothing good have I  
Where-by Thy grace to claim;  
I'll wash my garments white  
In the blood of Calvary's Lamb.

Jesus paid it all,  
All to Him I owe;  
Sin had left a crimson stain,  
He washed it white as snow.

And when, before the throne,  
I stand in Him complete,  
"Jesus died my soul to save,"  
My lips shall still repeat.

Jesus paid it all,  
All to Him I owe;  
Sin had left a crimson stain,  
He washed it white as snow.

## The Sermon by Rev Howard Wright

### Read James 2:14-26 and Matthew 7:13-23 – Living Faithfully

We continue our series on the letter of James, who was most likely the half-brother of Jesus. James writes to the church encouraging us to take on the family likeness and join in the family business. For James our faith impacts our daily lives, our attitudes and behaviours, and especially our encounters with others.

Today, we continue what Timothy started last week with how mercy as an behaviour reveals our inner status as Christians, that is, people of faith.

James announces, somewhat surprisingly and bluntly: *‘What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?’* (v.14.)

James knows that we ‘need’ faith – and that it is by faith that we are saved. See James 2:1 & 5 where the brothers and sisters are believers – literally, having faith – and faith is gifted to ‘the poor’. James knows from Jesus’ teaching that it’s faith not works that we are saved, but he also knows that it’s by our fruit and relationship with Jesus that that we are recognised and saved (Matthew 7:15-23).

So, James in this passage gives us two sets of couplets to make his point.

In verses 15-17 he illustrates to us what faith is not, that is, where belief can be ineffectual. Seeing someone in need, being able to help, and doing nothing is not representative of the Kingdom of God’s values – it’s not what Jesus does, so it’s not the family likeness or business - see Luke 4:18-19. This ‘faith’, this belief, is not accompanied by action so it’s dead (v.17)

Our beliefs affect our behaviour. That all behaviour is motivated is a fundamental principle of psychology. If there’s no effect on our behaviour, then we don’t really believe – see Matthew 7:20. We are to respond as Jesus would! To take on the family likeness, to love our neighbour! Read Galatians 5:6b & 13-15.

In verses 25-26 James now shows us what does. Rahab demonstrates costly compassion, as an outward sign of her internal belief. This is faith

that is effectual! Rahab risks her life to show compassion and trust in God's purposes. She knew that the army of God would win, but alone among her people is willing to adopt this God - see Joshua 2:9-11.

Rahab throws herself in with God and his people – there is no going back. The father of our faith, Abraham, leaves his people and throws his lot in with God's promise. And we, are invited to throw our lot in with Jesus and follow him: See Luke 14:26-27 & 33. The rest of Rahab's people might have 'believed' but they wouldn't commit – and faced severe consequences.

Again, James shows us what faith is not, vs 18-19. Just believing is inadequate. Not all those who 'believe' are destined for Heaven – as with Jericho. See Matthew 7:21-23. There are many who 'believe' in God, but it makes little difference to how they live – they may be good, even great people. I might believe in my wife and my marriage, but if I just think, that's nice and treat her kindly but never really find out what she is like, or what she actually likes, then our relationship is hollow, that is, I don't really believe in her, love her, or know her. I might believe in God and do 'good' things, but if I don't live like I believe in God, seeking to know him and living in response to him and his love then I 'believe', but in what, and so-what!

And, again, James illustrates what faith is, see 20-24. Abraham believes and acts, his faith prompts 'works', and in this example that James gives, Abraham to responds in obedience to God.

So what are we to do? We are to believe, to have faith, see Romans 10:8-10 and we are to act, to respond to God's love in love expressed to God and others. Read again Galatians 5: 6b & 13-15. And by our loving actions all will know that we are his disciples, see John 13:35.

**7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter:** *O God the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: we beseech you, leave us not comfortless, but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is gone before, 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 and Bowls: May 20<sup>th</sup> and June 17<sup>th</sup> at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: May 27<sup>th</sup> and June 24<sup>th</sup> 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.pariahofmedsteadandfourmarks.co.uk>