

23rd March, 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:

Take my life and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my moments and my days;
let them flow in endless praise,
let them flow in endless praise.

Take my hands and let them move
at the impulse of thy love.
Take my feet and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee,
swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice and let me sing
always, only, for my King.
Take my lips and let them be
filled with messages from thee,
filled with messages from thee.

Take my silver and my gold;
not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use
every power as thou shalt choose,
every power as thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne,
it shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee,
ever, only, all for thee.

The Sermon by Timothy James.

Read Isaiah 13:9-13, Mark 13:1-8 & 24-36 – Being Alert

Mark sets us a vivid scene: the setting is the Mount of Olives, looking over to Temple Mount; it follows acted and spoken parables of the Temple's forthcoming destruction (11:12-21, 12:1-12); its content consists of more detailed warnings of destruction and promises of vindication for Jesus and his people; and its language is like Old Testament prophecy.

The Jews of Jesus' day are anticipating the coming of God's Messiah to destroy the foreign oppressors, to restore the Temple worship to its ancient purity and to make Jerusalem the seat of his power. So when Jesus prophesies the destruction of Herod's Temple, the natural question is "When?" (v.4), i.e. "When will you come in your kingdom? When will this wicked age end and God restore his people?". This is what Peter, Andrew, James and John ask – they still don't understand that Jesus' kingdom is not what they have been expecting.

His response echoes Hebrew prophecies of judgment on a city of God's enemies (like Isaiah's prophecy against the great city of Babylon in today's reading) and turning it, shockingly, against Jerusalem. The expectation of God's people is to be paradoxically fulfilled not in the destruction of the Nations and the glorification of Jerusalem and the Temple, but in the crucifixion of the Messiah and the destruction of the Temple. When this happens, Jesus advises his friends (vv.14-23) not to stay and fight, but to run for the hills

This sort of prophecy shows the theological significance of historical events: the veil is lifted, their eyes are opened and the true meaning is revealed. In the process, Jesus is also showing them how to make sense of his coming trial and crucifixion. This does not become clear, of course, till after those events.

The biblical test of a prophet's authenticity is the accuracy of his predictions: *"If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken"* (Deut. 19:22). Jesus' prophecy came true about 40 years later, in AD70, when the future Roman emperor Titus responded to a Jewish revolt by destroying the Temple.

This is, of course, of more than merely historical interest to us now. Jesus turns his prediction into an urgent instruction, captured in three words: take heed, stay awake, watch! The master is still absent at the end of the parable at the end of the chapter, as we may sometimes feel God is for us, but what his servants should be doing is quite clear. “Stay awake!” is what Jesus says to everyone (including us) (v.37).

What does this entail?

- **Don't be deceived (vv.5-6).** We need to ask what might deceive us, and be ready to turn back to the Bible for guidance.
- **Don't get hung up on timing (vv.7, 32).** Never mind the master's intention. That's not your problem. Stay awake!
- **Stick to your assigned task (vv.34-36).** What are your assigned tasks? God has assigned responsibilities to each of us, but one task for all of us is there in v.10 “... the gospel must first be preached to all nations”. Are you at your task, or are you asleep?

In 1780 Abraham Davenport, a Connecticut legislator, responded to an extraordinary episode of darkness which had many fearing that it was the Day of Judgment, by saying “The day of judgment is either approaching, or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for an adjournment; if it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. I move therefore that candles be brought.” They continued their business.

- **Look forward to the master's return (v.37).** We should be in a state of eager anticipation. The centre of the disciples' hope was not to be the Jerusalem Temple but the coming of the Son of Man. Our confidence must be not in human institutions (even the Church of England!) but in God's direct intervention, whenever and however that takes place.

We may experience him now as absent and long for his coming, but he will come.

3rd Sunday of Lent: Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; 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 and Bowls: April 16th at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: March 26th and April 23rd at 10.30am in Church Hall.
- Easter Tea & Praise: Sunday 6th April, 3pm.
- 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>