

7th December, 2025

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:

I cannot tell why he, whom angels
worship,
should set his love upon the sons of
men,
or why, as Shepherd, he should seek
the wanderers,
to bring them back, they know not how
or when.
But this I know, that he was born of
Mary
when Bethl'em's manger was his only
home,
and that he lived at Nazareth and
laboured,
and so the Saviour, Saviour of the
world, is come.

I cannot tell how silently he suffered,
as with his peace he graced this place
of tears,
or how his heart upon the cross was
broken,
the crown of pain to three and thirty
years.
But this I know, he heals the broken-
hearted

and stays our sin and calms our lurking
fear
and lifts the burden from the heavy
laden;
for still the Saviour, Saviour of the
world is here.

I cannot tell how he will win the
nations,
how he will claim his earthly heritage,
how satisfy the needs and aspirations
of east and west, of sinner and of sage.
But this I know, all flesh shall see his
glory,
and he shall reap the harvest he has
sown,
and some glad day his sun will shine in
splendour
when he the Saviour, Saviour of the
world, is known.

I cannot tell how all the lands shall
worship,
when at his bidding every storm is
stilled,
or who can say how great the jubilation

when every heart with love and joy is filled.

But this I know, the skies will thrill with rapture,

and myriad myriad human voices sing,

and earth to heav'n, and heav'n to earth, will answer,

'at last the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is King!'

The Sermon by Rev Howard Wright

Revelation 21:9-27 and John 17:20-26 – The Wedding

Today, in advent and at the conclusion of our teaching series, we jump ahead in Revelation, for a sneak peek – and will return to the book in the New Year.

We read about, one of the seven angels, seven bowls, seven plagues. We've skipped a lot of sevens. There have been seven scenes, and now there's eighth!

Like the Old Testament Jubilee year, after 7 x 7s (that is 49) is the Jubilee year, an eighth and the year of the Lord's favour. But even more, the eighth scene at the end of earth's time is like the resurrection day – it is the first day of the new week.

This is the new permanent. The bride has proved faithful and has been victorious. Read again Revelation 21:9-11.

The seven letters were a full diagnosis of the church's condition – taking the 7 together represents the whole church, the whole people of God, His bride. Now at the end of the that era and the with the dawning of the rest of eternity, the bride has been fully prepared.

This city representing the bride is precious. God dwells within us, in the midst of us and causes us to shine with his radiance, and we are made precious. The stones mentioned, all have echoes in the Old Testament and indicate our value. We are become the way that we were meant to be.

The city representing the bride is founded (foundations) on truth (see v.14), that is the foundation of the apostles teaching. And, this city is vast – the 12,000 stadia, approximately 1,380 miles is symbolic of spacious. We might like the church in Philadelphia feel little but we are mighty.

All the promises and encouragements have come true:

- *To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. (Ephesus – Revelation 2:7)*
- *The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death. (Smyrna – Revelation 2:11)*

- *To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it. (Pergamum – Revelation 2:17)*
- *²⁶ To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations – ²⁷ that one “will rule them with an iron sceptre and will dash them to pieces like pottery”^[b] – just as I have received authority from my Father. ²⁸ I will also give that one the morning star. (Thyatira – Revelation 2:26-28)*
- *The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. (Sardis – Revelation 3:5)*
- *The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name. (Philadelphia – Revelation 3:12)*
- *To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne. (Laodicea – Revelation 3:21)*

This the hope and future for the faithful, it's our future because of Jesus. We are invited into inherit all this. Our future is secure and truly marvellous.

Yesterday at Roger Fletcher's Thanksgiving service we read: 1 Thessalonians 4:13 & 18 – please read this.

C.S. Lewis talks about this life as insubstantial, without solidity or colour, whereas the future that awaits us is solid and abundant in colour, overwhelming in light and joy, love, a place where we are whole – it is the home we are made for – the actual and genuine 'happily ever after.'

And glimpsing this future can inspire us today. If you've been to the cinema and it's a good movie, you can be so drawn in the story and setting, that when the movie finishes and you make your way home, you feel that you might even see a character appear around the next corner.

Our glimpsing of the glory that awaits us enables us to see God at work today – even as though this future will appear around the next corner. Be inspired today – to live for Christ, to remain faithful against ideas or behaviours that would lead us away, and to be determined to help others find Christ and this future for themselves. Live today in anticipation of the completeness that God has called us – God's Kingdom is coming, and will come, his will, will be done. *'And so we will be with the Lord for ever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.'* 1 Thessalonians 4:18

2nd Sunday of Advent: *O Lord, raise up, we pray, your power and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness we are grievously hindered in running the race that is set before us, your bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit, be honour and glory, 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: December 17th and January 21st at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: January 28th at 10.30am in Church Hall.
- Christmas Tea and Praise: December 21st at 3pm in Church.
- 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>