

15th March, 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:

Through all the changing scenes of life,
in trouble and in joy,
the praises of my God shall still
my heart and tongue employ.
Of his deliverance I will boast,
till all that are distressed,
from my example comfort take
and lay their griefs to rest.

O magnify the LORD with me,
exalt his holy name;
when in distress to him I called,
he to my rescue came.

The hosts of God encamp around
the dwellings of the just;
deliverance he affords to all
who in his promise trust.

O taste and see that he is good;
experience will decide
how blest are they, and only they
who in the LORD confide.
Fear him, you saints, and you will
then
have nothing else to fear;
make serving him your sole delight,
your wants shall be his care.

The Sermon by Matt Senior

Read Colossians 3:12-17 and John 19:25-27 – Mothering Sunday.

Mary's motherhood journey with Jesus is both bitter and sweet. In Luke 1 Mary is told that she will give birth to the 'Son of the Most High,' – no doubt an honour and a privilege but for Mary, not yet married, it has the look of a scandalous, illegitimate pregnancy. Before long she is fleeing with Joseph and Jesus to Egypt, to keep her son safe from death. Jesus may have been sinless, but he was certainly able to cause his mother grief. Luke 2 tells us of the child Jesus getting separated from his family for several days, before he is located in the temple courts – 'My Father's house,' as he puts it.

Having been told who her child would be by the angel Gabriel, Mary has a front row seat to the child she bore, growing up; fully god and fully human.

Perhaps then it's no surprise when, some years later, at a wedding in Cana, it is *Mary* who prompts Jesus into action with his first recorded miracle, turning water into wine.

Mary must have had some notion that her son had the power to help, but I imagine even she was taken by surprise by what Jesus did. This was the first real sign that revealed Jesus' power and glory. But even with Mary's trust in who Jesus was and who he was becoming, watching Jesus' ministry from the sidelines cannot have been easy. With a country under Roman occupation and the religious rule of pharisees and teachers of the law, Jesus' ability to ruffle feathers was putting him in harm's way.

In Mark 3, Mary and Jesus' brothers go to take charge of him, believing that he is "out of his mind." But when they get to him Jesus responds, "Who are my mother and brothers? Here [the people he was sat with] are my mother and brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

And then Mary's parenting of Jesus ends with our second reading today, with Jesus nailed on a cross.

This is the bitterest moment that a parent could endure but Jesus does something beautiful and extraordinary. Jesus saw his mother near the

cross, with his disciple, John. Jesus says to her, “Woman, here is your son” and then to John, “Here is your mother.”

Jesus was Mary’s oldest son, he had a duty to ensure that his mother was taken care of into her later years. But he entrusts her to John. Why? We know that Jesus had brothers who would have looked after her following Jesus’ death.

It seems that Jesus, in trusting Mary and John into each other’s care, is saying that flesh and blood family is not the most important thing. We’re told that Jesus’ brothers did not believe in him. John, on the other hand, was a devoted disciple, staying with Jesus to the very end.

Jesus, in his dying moments, demonstrates two things that are worth us remembering this mother’s day. Firstly that as children we have a duty to our parents. Jesus is taking seriously his responsibility to make sure his mother is ok when he is gone. Honouring our parents gets to be one of the ten commandments. We are meant to respect our parents, have gratitude for them, and care for them. As our parents age and get older, this duty to our parents arguably becomes even more important. There are of course parents who have fallen short, and sometimes a long way short, of the parenthood that we require, and God’s word makes it clear that the relationship between children and parents is not a one-way street.

The other thing that Jesus demonstrates is that our spiritual family, the family of those who believe in Jesus, takes priority. Jesus wants Mary to be with someone who loved and followed him. Arguably our most important relationships are those that we have with our fellow believers. Remember Jesus in the earlier story in Mark 3, “Who are my mother and brothers?...Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

In our church family we should all recognise in each other our brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, and children. We are a large, extended family. We, who believe, are part of a spiritual family, whether we have a human family or not.

And how do we live as family? We could do far worse than to follow the words we find in our Colossians reading.

4th Sunday of Lent: *Merciful Lord, absolve your people from their offences, that through your bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the chains of those sins which by our frailty we have committed; grant this, heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour, 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:

- Palm Sunday Tea and Praise at 3pm, Sunday 29th March, in Church.
- Tea and Chat and Bowls: March 18th and April 15th at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: March 25th 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>