

23rd November, 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, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard My people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin,
My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear My light to them?
Whom shall I send?

Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if You lead me.
I will hold Your people in my heart
I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have born my peoples pain.
I have wept for love of them, They turn
away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
Give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak My word to them,
Whom shall I send?

Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if You lead me.
I will hold Your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them,
My hand will save
Finest bread I will provide,
Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give My life to them,
Whom shall I send?

Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if You lead me.
I will hold Your people in my heart.

The Sermon by Jane Hughes

Read Revelation 3:14-22 and John 4:1-10 – The Longed-For Bride

We come to the last of the letters, the end of the first act, if you like, of Revelation. This, like the others, follows a familiar pattern. Jesus is introduced, and he knows their deeds, but unlike the others, he has nothing praiseworthy to say- yet there is still hope.

Laodicea is located about 45 miles southeast of Philadelphia and about 100 miles east of Ephesus. It was built on a plateau and lacked its own water supply. Most of its water was piped in via an underground aqueduct. The quality of the water once it arrived at Laodicea was not great, lukewarm and heavy with mineral deposits.

Laodicea is known for 3 chief industries, all of which have relevance in today's passage.

1. A very wealthy City on the crossroads of two major trade routes, Laodicea was a centre of banking (Rev 3:17)
2. A considerable proportion of its wealth came from cloth and the clothing industry- Laodicea was world famous for black woolled sheep. They took great pride in their clothes and exported them all over the world. (Rev:18)
3. They were famous for their medical school, in particular, an eye powder held to be a remedy for weak and failing eyes (Rev 3:18)

Jesus is introduced as the Amen, the faithful and true witness, and the ruler of God's creation. From the Gospels (John 1:3) and the letter to the Colossians (Col 1:15-18 and 4:16), the Laodiceans would have been familiar with Jesus as the Ruler of Creation. They would also recognise 'The Amen' from the Gospels, where Jesus frequently begins statements with "Verily, verily," or "Truly, truly", translated from the Greek word "amen,". This word Amen is repeated to emphasise importance and to affirm the truthfulness and reliability of a statement. When used at the beginning of a sentence, it adds weight to the words spoken by someone with first-hand knowledge and authority. In this introduction, the readers are left in no doubt as to Jesus' authority over all things.

Jesus finds only faults with the church in Laodicea; He knows their deeds as neither hot nor cold (V15). What more terrible condemnation could there be of a church that the Lord would prefer cold Christianity to that of what She, the church, offered

They are being called out for being lukewarm (Rev 3:16). The local Laodiceans would relate to their own local water supply, the unpalatable and tepid nature of the water piped in by aqueduct.

Yet the church in Laodicea thought they were fine (Rev 3:17). This wealthy city, successful in banking, trade and healthcare, had become self-sufficient; what need then did the people of Laodicea have for God? They put their trust in material prosperity, outward luxury and physical health – they put their trust in things of this world –

The message to the church of Laodicea and to all people in all times is a warning, a reminder, that in the comfort of our surroundings to not neglect our souls.

Christ has nothing but condemnation; he holds a mirror up to their riches and shows them their true nature (Rev 3:17), and Laodicea seems condemned.

Yet all is not lost, Christ offers hope (Rev 3: 19-20). Jesus still offers his Love; he still offers himself.

The fact that Laodicea is included, the fact that Christ takes the time to rebuke her, shows his love; He has not given up on her. Christ, introduced at the beginning of this letter as the ruler of God's creation, offers redemption.

The Threat of total rejection if she will not repent is balanced by the promise of total reinstatement if she will. This promise, this offer, is presented to not only the church as a whole, but to individuals in Laodicea and also to us as a church and to us as individuals.

Where Christ says, "If anyone (Rev 3:20), he is appealing to the heart of every individual, so even if the whole church does not heed his warning, the individual may/. To those in the Laodicean church (and to us), He offers this promise: a seat at the divine banquet and a place on the throne of heaven. When we seek him, he responds, when we open the door, He will come in and eat with us.

Christ is calling his church to prepare. We see later in Revelation that there is much rejoicing: 'For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.' (see also Revelation 19, 21 and 22).

In recent weeks, we have read of the promises made to the church, and to us:

The right to eat from the tree of life eternal life, to be unhurt in judgement, given a new name, to rule with him now and into the future, to

be clothed in white acknowledged by name before the father, a guarantee of belonging, God as his beloved children and a seat at the divine banquet and a place on the throne of heaven.

Having reached the end of the letters, having finished with these promises, how could we not take a moment to respond?

Take some time in prayer to pause now, to return to our first love, to reflect on truth and actions, to test whether we are lukewarm or on fire for Christ?

Advent Sunday, Christ the King Sunday: *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: December 17th and January 21st at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: November 26th and 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.pariahofmedsteadandfourmarks.co.uk>