

26th July, 2026

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:

God is working his purpose out,
as year succeeds to year;
God is working this purpose out,
and the time is drawing near;
nearer and nearer draws the time,
the time that shall surely be:
when the earth shall be filled with the
glory of God
as the waters cover the sea.

From utmost east to utmost west,
where human feet have trod,
by the mouth of many messengers
goes forth the voice of God:
"Give ear to me, ye continents,
ye isles, give ear to me,
that the earth may be filled with the
glory of God
as the waters cover the sea."

Let us go forth in the strength of God,
with the banner of Christ unfurled,
that the light of the glorious gospel of
truth
may shine throughout the world.
Let us all fight with sorrow and sin
to set the captives free,
that the earth may be filled with the
glory of God
as the waters cover the sea.

All we can do is nothing worth
unless God blesses the deed.
Vainly we hope for the harvest-tide
till God gives life to the seed.
Yet nearer and nearer draws the time,
the time that shall surely be,
when the earth shall be filled with the
glory of God
as the waters cover the sea..

The Sermon by Rev Howard Wright

Read Psalm 104:1-35, Matthew 8:23-27 – Creator

The Psalms give voice to our prayers, our praise, our laments, and even our complaints. God is big and beautiful enough to receive all praise. He is also big and merciful enough to receive all our concerns, fears, and worries. Like the good parent who knows that their child's anger and lashing out comes from fear and inadequacy.

Today's Psalm, such beautiful and powerful words. We have an echo of Creation in the order and it is itself echoed in Revelation, when the four living creatures, representing all creation bow down and declare: *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.* (Revelation 4:8).

We are going to consider the psalm under four headings, four Ps. Perspective, protection, provision, and, praise.

Perspective – re-read verses 1-4.

How big is your God? This God is terrifyingly awesome and beautiful. God is distinct from creation – no pantheism, but a personal creator. No 'force', 'Gaia', or 'Mother Nature', but God, absolute, wise, and all powerful. The description of the control over water and the 'deep' revisited in the miracle of the calming of the sea reinforces this: God is over and in control of all creation not part of it. See Psalm 107:29-30 (which is not in our series!)
²⁹ *He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed.*
³⁰ *They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven.*

The world seems smaller now than those first reading this Psalm experienced. We can ascend to the clouds – the water in the sky. But this doesn't mean we see God as small for we now see better than the ancients could how vast, possibly infinitely, huge the universe is!

God is vast but we are tiny. We depend on God for our very breath – read verses 29-30. It is God in Christ who holds all things together, read Colossians 1:15-17 and Hebrews 1:3. Let's keep working on perspective – just how big is your God?

Protection – re-read verses 6-9

If God is so big, his capability to protect is assured. Re-read verses 6-9 – God has set boundaries. We considered this in Revelation. God has set limits of both time and extent over the damage we can do to ourselves and each other. His judgement is always merciful.

Re-read verse 5 – regardless of the mess we make, God has got this and there are limits. This does not lead to apathy, but to action to rejoice that the earth is made good and help to make it even better – for individuals, communities and the whole earth. The church and we as individuals are significant part of God’s answer. ‘Go!’ says Jesus, invite others in.

God’s ultimate protection, as seen through the whole of scripture and further amplified in Revelation, is the blood of Jesus, shed for us to deliver/protect us from death and judgement. We have boundaries set for us by God. He protects us, we have been made perfect and are being made holy (Hebrews 10:14).

Provision

Out of God’s vastness he protects us and provides for us. Re-read Verses 13-15 and 27-28. This Psalm unsurprisingly, it’s suggested, was used at Harvest Festivals and on the Day of Atonement – the ultimate provision – the rescue of the people of God from slavery.

Where do we notice God’s provision? It has not rained here for 6 weeks or so, and seems unlikely to rain soon, but we still have food. In Karamoja it has not rained for over 3 months and all the crops planted at the last rains have died – they are currently dependant on God in a different way to us. There are people dying as they wait for the World Food Programme, their own government, and us to respond. We have clean water, and so much more.

Notice God’s provision to us, and give thanks, notice others in need and share and give! Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote, *“It is only with gratitude that life becomes rich.”*

Praise

What’s our response to a proper perspective on God’s glory, and recognising both his, protection and provision? The psalmist responds with praise. Re-read verse 1 and 33-35.

It is by God’s Spirit, his breath that we breathe (verses 29-30), let us use this breath to praise. Let us resolve to praise – live thankfully, live observing and looking for the glory of God and come to worship determined to see God, regardless even if it’s not your favourite song, or a service you’d choose.

So, in conclusion: Work on Perspective. Receive and revel in God’s Protection, inviting others in. Receive gratefully God’s Provision sharing generously with others. And, respond to God in Praise!

8th Sunday after Trinity: Almighty Lord and everlasting God, we beseech you to direct, sanctify and govern both our hearts and bodies in the ways of your laws and the works of your commandments; that through your most mighty protection, both here and ever, we may be preserved in body and soul; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 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: August 19th at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: August 26th 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.parishofmedsteadandfourmarks.co.uk>