

10th November, 2024



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:

No list of sins I have not done
No list of virtues I pursue
No list of those I am not like
Can earn myself a place with You
O God, be merciful to me
I am a sinner through and through
My only hope of righteousness
Is not in me, but only You

No humble dress, no fervent prayer
No lifted hands, no tearful song
No recitation of the truth
Can justify a single wrong
My righteousness is Jesus' life
My debt was paid by Jesus' death
My weary load was borne by Him
And he alone can give me rest

No separation from the world
No work I do, no gift I give
Can cleanse my conscience, cleanse
my hands
I cannot cause my soul to live
But Jesus died and rose again
The power of death is overthrown
My God is merciful to me
And merciful in Christ alone

My righteousness is Jesus' life
My debt was paid by Jesus' death
My weary load was borne by Him
And he alone can give me rest.

The Sermon by Martin Beckwith

Read Joshua 4:1-9 and Mark 6:1-13 – Being acceptable

Some years ago, in the week or so before Remembrance Sunday, an overseas visitor asked me *“why are so many of you wearing those red flowers?”* It’s a fair question. It’s not immediately obvious why we wear poppies. Or what the cairn of stones meant in the Joshua reading. Or the sum of the events we’ve stepped through in Mark 1-6. They all need explaining to be understood.

I could have said to the visitor *“well, it’s because we’ve all made a contribution to the Poppy Appeal”*, which would have been the truth, but certainly not the whole truth – it fact it would have been misleading, misrepresentative, disingenuous to the point of dishonest. Or the father or grandfather could have answered the child’s question, *“What do these stones mean”* by saying, *“well it’s just a heap of stones dredged from the river”*. That would have been true, but not truthful. And from these chapters we could say of Jesus that he’s just a healer, a teacher, philosopher, a showman. Yes, possibly: but it’s not the full picture. There’s much more to it.

Peter, writing later in NT takes up the theme. These basic building blocks of bible text, the accounts of Jesus’ life which build into themes are *“pure spiritual milk”* (1) which is where most people start learning. But there’s something badly wrong if it stays that way. In Hebrews writer says, *“anyone still on milk, being an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness”*. (2) In other words there’s more to it than just a bible story. Paul tells Timothy to study the scripture, to develop understanding of what’s behind the symbol or the incident and find its context. *“Rightly handling”*(3) the word of God.

When the children read out the names of the fallen from Four Marks during the ceremony at the war memorial, they have, I hope, no understanding of the reality. They’ll go on to learn basic dates and names. Some may read the poetry, novels and watch the films. A few will study much deeper into strategy and context. Gradually Remembrance will take on deeper, fuller meaning as is appropriate and relevant to them so it’s not just dry history but has meaning and contemporary application. There’s got to be a *“So what”* ?

I answered the overseas visitor by saying, *“it’s to remember all those who died in the two world wars and subsequent conflicts,”* and added, *“and for all of*

us to remember never to let it happen again". It makes no claim to eloquence but does add a contemporary "so what" factor which, perhaps, our politicians would do well to consider carefully today.

The "So what" takeaway from the stones is simple :- *What do these stones mean?* " It reminds us how *"The Lord dried up the Jordan before you ... so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful so that you might always fear[respect] the Lord your God."* (4) A reminder to the people and their children that God had kept his promise to them, and a demonstration to those around that our God is able.

And what of Jesus' disciples, who witnessed most of these incidents in Mark's gospel? From today's reading they saw - and only them, no one else - two of Jesus' most famous activities the names of which – feeding 5000 and walking on water – have entered common idiom. What must they have thought as they chewed their way through the 12 baskets of excess bread and fish throughout the following week? They'd been literally fed; were they spiritually fed? Well, they didn't get it. They didn't understand the "So What" of Jesus' actions. They couldn't see how, for example, from these two events Jesus was demonstrating infinite power over nature and material; and that because they - the disciples - had involved him in the situation, and he had blessed an utterly insignificant quantity of food which they - the disciples – faithfully distributed according to his instruction, it became abundant; sufficient for all, and they ended with more than they'd started; nothing was wasted. And that though their life of discipleship was a mixture of hard work and often difficult headwind, there was always Jesus' presence and power watching and working over them.

It's remarkable they didn't realise who Jesus was. In time, of course, they did come to understand and became representatives of it and testified to it. May the Holy Spirit help us to do the same.

(1) 1 Peter 2:2

(2) Hebrews 5:13

(3) 1 Timothy 2:15

(4) Joshua 4:21-25

3rd Sunday before Advent: Almighty Father, whose will is to restore all things in your beloved Son, the King of all: govern the hearts and minds of those in authority, and bring the families of the nations, divided and torn apart by the ravages of sin, to be subject to his just and gentle rule; 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: November 20th at 2pm in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Bowls: November 20th at 2pm in the Church.
- Coffee and Questions: November 27th at 10.30am in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise: TBA
- 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>