

13th October, 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:

Alleluia! Sing to Jesus;
His the sceptre, His the throne.

Alleluia! His the triumph,
His the victory alone.

Hark! The songs of peaceful Zion
thunder like a mighty flood:

"Jesus out of every nation
has redeemed us by His blood."

Alleluia! Not as orphans
are we left in sorrow now.

Alleluia! He is near us;
faith believes, nor questions how.

Tho' the cloud from sight received
Him

when the forty days were o'er,
shall our hearts forget His promise,
"I am with you evermore"?

Alleluia! Bread of heaven,
here on earth our food, our stay.

Alleluia! Here the sinful
flee to You from day to day.
Intercessor, Friend of sinners,
earth's Redeemer, hear our plea
where the songs of all the sinless
sweep across the crystal sea.

The Sermon by Rev Howard Wright

Read 13 Hebrews 3:7-13 and Mark 4:1-20 – Being Sown

We continue our series in Mark. People today are curious, hungry, to hear, but how much will they hear. People want good news, and as Christians we have the best news. This parable in Mark is for them, and it's for us! *"Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."* (v.9)

Jesus lists four types of hearers:

Firstly, those hardened to hearing. The trodden down, solid soil of the path is not a place for seeds to germinate and grow. These people are *'... ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!'*" (v.12 – from Isaiah 6:9-10). These are folk unwilling to listen to God's word, his Word, is too challenging for them, it questions their values, lifestyle, and dreams.

The challenge for us is, are there aspects of God's word, to which we are hardened? Things that we are not willing to hear, or respond to?

The appropriate treatment for this kind of soil is to find a tool to turn it over. The antidote to our hardened hearts is love. We are told that it is God's *'kindness that leads to repentance'* (Romans 2:4).

For our own hard hearts we need to reflect on the goodness and kindness of God, learning to trust him with all areas of our lives. For others yet to receive God, they need to see God's relentless love through us in our own acts and words of kindness.

Secondly, those shallow rooted, worried about troubles and persecutions, they give up because of pain. I was reluctant as a young teenager to accept Jesus, because I knew it would result in marking me out for bullying at my school. In the end I, thankfully, decided that God knew best and trusted him.

For many we fear the response of others, family and friends, whether in accepting Christ, or in a radical commitment to him – none of us like to be seen as weird. For others we fear the future and are determined to believe that we can fix it ourselves – being so overwhelmed by the stresses that we either don't notice the hand held out by Jesus, or supposing it irrelevant to our fears.

The antidote to our shallowness of heart is to recognise the glory of God and be afraid of the right things. Jesus challenges us about being afraid of the right things: read Matthew 10:22-31. And notice Jesus kind but firm words to Mary (Mark 10:41-42). Our hearts need to be focused on God and his glory, read Hebrews 12:1-3.

Thirdly, those superficial, who are preoccupied with 'the deceitfulness of wealth' and pleasure.

There are so many distractions in our lives – have you meet the smartphone! There are so many things to occupy us. But none of them truly satisfy. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon, probably the most wealthy and powerful man of his age, writes about the meaningless of life. Having tried wisdom, wealth, building projects, power, wine, women, and song, he wrote: *I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labour, and this was the reward for all my toil. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.* (Ecclesiastes 2:10-11)

The rich young man come to Jesus with his question, 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?' but he went away sad (Mark 10:17 - 22), unwilling to part with his wealth. How preoccupied are with 'the deceitfulness of wealth' and pleasure – our society risks, like Solomon, being entertained to death?

The antidote to a preoccupied heart is trusting God for our needs and pursuing the 'wealth' of the Kingdom of God – read Matthew 6:31-34.

Fourthly, those well rooted are fruitful. Read Psalm 1 and John 15:1-8.

The person who hears and responds finds life. This good soil people are fruitful in character (Galatians 5:22-23) and mission (Acts 1:8). We are people growing in grace and deepening our relationship with Jesus and the overflow of this relationship is fruitfulness for the Kingdom of God. This fruitfulness is seen in helping prepare ground in our own and other's lives and the sowing of more seeds. Be praying – 'Lord, who can I share with? Who can I bring to hear J. John, to our Christmas services, or accompany to Alpha.'

Read Hebrews 3:7-13

20th Sunday after Trinity: God, the giver of life, whose Holy Spirit wells up within your Church: by the Spirit's gifts equip us to live the gospel of Christ and make us eager to do your will, that we may share with the whole creation the joys of eternal life; 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: October 16th and November 20th at 2pm in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Bowls: October 16th and November 20th at 2pm in the Church.
- Coffee and Questions: October 23rd and 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.parishofmedsteadandfourmarks.co.uk>