

14th April, 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.**

Song:

See, what a morning, gloriously
bright,
with the dawning of hope in
Jerusalem;
folded the grave clothes, tomb filled
with light,
as the angels announce, 'Christ is
risen!'

See God's salvation plan, wrought in
love,
borne in pain, paid in sacrifice,
fulfilled in Christ, the man, for he
lives,
Christ is risen from the dead!

See Mary weeping: 'Where is he
laid?'
as in sorrow she turns from the
empty tomb;
hears a voice speaking, calling her
name:

it's the Master, the Lord raised to life
again!
The voice that spans the years,
speaking life,
stirring hope, bringing peace to us,
will sound till he appears, for he lives,
Christ is risen from the dead!

One with the Father, Ancient of Days,
through the Spirit who clothes faith
with certainty,
honour and blessing, glory and praise
to the King crowned with power and
authority!

And we are raised with him, death is
dead,
love has won, Christ has conquered;
and we shall reign with him, for he
lives,
Christ is risen from the dead!

Philippians 1:1-6 and John 15:9-17 – In Partnership

The Sermon by Rev. Howard Wright

Philippians is one of Paul's most joyful letters. And yet, he's writing from prison (most likely Rome), is facing opposition, and whilst in Philippi he was flogged and imprisoned – unjustly, and asked to leave the city. But, through this imprisonment and an earthquake the young church started (see Acts 16).

Philippi was a Roman colony, modelled on Rome for art, architecture, business, and law – a 'Rome in miniature'. Here the Gospel first set foot in Europe and on the Greek mainland. From this Roman colony, the Gospel spread through Greece and beyond.

The letter is about a person – the Lord Jesus Christ, and has three major themes. Unity in the person of Christ, warnings about attempts to divert us from Christ, and being ready for the return of the Lord Jesus. This leads to the main question of the letter: time is brief, what am I to give my life to? And this remains a question us today.

There are three things for us from this passage:

Firstly, we are God's Holy People (v.1). 'Holy ones', (hagios) is often translated 'saints. We are made holy by God the Father, through Jesus' work on the cross, and by the indwelling transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

We are a holy people by the gift of God, read 1 Peter 2:9. But holiness is also a life work, see Hebrews 10:14. We are to work towards holiness, it's a lifetime commitment to transformation. Disciples, and holiness, is 'made' by discipline – prayer, bible study, meditation, service, generosity, worship, fellowship, modesty, and capturing them all love for God and neighbour – as in John 15.

It is our work, and it is in cooperation with the Holy Spirit – see Galatians 5:22-26.

To be Holy is to be set-aside, to be separate, usually for a purpose.

The second thing from this passage is:

Our purpose: we are partners in God's Good News – the Gospel.

In our passage we read: *'I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel'*. We, of Medstead and Four Marks, are partners together in the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus. We are all partners in the Kingdom of God. God's project to bring everything back to peace with him.

Even people who dislike each other, can unify over a vision, a goal, a project, whether in business or on the sports field. A gift, and curse of the Church is we let anyone in! We are diverse and different, with our different strengths and weaknesses, with our different personalities. But Jesus challenges us to love, and to pull together.

The letter is written to all the people, including the people's servants, the overseers and deacons.

Letter is addressed, servants Paul and Timothy to the saints in Philippi! The reverse of what we would expect. We'd have said St Paul, for instance. All the people – the Greek term *Laos* – are ministers, those chosen to lead, are to lead through service – and servants are listed second! Paul and Timothy list themselves as 'servants' of Christ – alongside, and, in partnership as we shall see.

Our PCC, to be elected this Tuesday, the wardens, deanery synod reps, PCC members, and myself, are servants – alongside.

Our partnership in the Gospel is a reason for thankfulness and joy. As is our partnership with our wider diocese, the wider Church, and in particular our brothers and sisters in Karamoja – we are part of Global church. it's not all about us here – we are part of a global project, the Kingdom of God and it's been running way before we even walked the earth and it's unstoppable!

Thirdly, We are God's work and he will complete us. We have an extraordinary security. Like the child in a playground we can say when threatened, 'My dad's bigger than your dad.' We have a security, nothing can snatch us out of our Father's hand (John 10:28) – we are 'in' Christ Jesus. We are held – as Paul was held securely in jail, so in a much more positive way, we're held securely by Jesus.

What God has started, he will finish. Read Daniel 2:44-45, and notice Jesus' parables about the Kingdom, especially in Matthew 13.

God wants us to flourish – ²*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*. God wishes us 'Peace', we noted last week, that Jesus' first word to his disciples after the resurrection was 'peace'! It is the loss of peace that God, in Jesus, has come to fix!

We are part of something huge.

- A relationship with the Holy God, which make us holy.
- A partnership together with each other and God.
- And part of something with eternal significance – the Kingdom of God.

Third Sunday of Easter: Almighty Father, who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples with the sight of the risen Lord: give us such knowledge of his presence with us, that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life and serve you continually in righteousness and truth; 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: April 17th at 2pm in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Bowls: April 17th at 2pm in the Church.
- Coffee and Questions: April 24th at 10.30am in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise: 3pm Sunday, 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>