

23rd June, 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:

Take my life and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee.

Take my moments and my days;
let them flow in endless praise,
let them flow in endless praise.

Take my hands and let them move
at the impulse of thy love.

Take my feet and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee,
swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice and let me sing
always, only, for my King.

Take my lips and let them be
filled with messages from thee,
filled with messages from thee.

Take my silver and my gold;
not a mite would I withhold.

Take my intellect and use
every power as thou shalt choose,
every power as thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine.

Take my heart it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne,
it shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure store.

Take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee,
ever, only, all for thee.

The Sermon by Timothy James

Sharing and Caring

Read Philippians 2:19-30 and John 13:31-34

Have you ever written anybody a reference? You have to confirm their qualifications, you may need to suggest in what sort of role they would excel, and you are expected to give a warm recommendation.

Paul and the Philippian believers are working together in the business of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Ch.1 v.5). People are a key resource of any organisation, and it is a vital aspect of partnership working to have the right people, so Paul now breaks off to deal with some important personnel issues. In effect, he provides references for Timothy and Epaphroditus to his partners in Philippi.

First, he addresses why he is sending them.

Timothy's immediate mission is communications: Paul wants to get news of the Philippians (which he is expecting will be positive), so he *hopes* to send Timothy (v.19). As for Epaphroditus, it seems to be more a welfare concern. Epaphroditus may be homesick, he is certainly anxious about his fellow-believers (v.26) and, despite his value to him personally (v.30b), Paul thinks everybody will be benefited by his return – Epaphroditus, the Philippians and even Paul himself (v.28). So he thinks it *necessary* to send him (v.25) – note the priority given to his concern for welfare.

Then, he gives his commendations.

Timothy has a wide set of gifts. Paul commends him for his track record of working closely with him in spreading the gospel (v.22), and his keeping the really crucial interests in mind, not his own, nor even Paul's, but those of Jesus (v.21). But the first recommendation Paul gives Timothy is that he is genuinely concerned for the welfare of the church members at Philippi (v.20). This seems to make him stand out as exceptional. His focus is not his own career or mission, but the thriving of the believers.

As for Epaphroditus, Paul gives him quite a list of titles (v.25), but emphasises above all the risks he has been prepared to take, even risking his life to do what the home church needed and to be of service to Paul.

So what does Paul expect the Philippian church to do about Timothy and Epaphroditus?

He expects them to recognise Timothy's worth (v.22). And he expects then to rejoice at getting Epaphroditus back (.28), to welcome him and to honour him as one who had risked his life for the work of Christ (vv.28-29).

These men are not just resources in the partnership business. They are people Paul and his fellow-partners valued and loved. Timothy was someone Paul was mentoring and developing, so he could pass on the task of spreading the gospel. Epaphroditus was an embodiment of the concern that the Philippians had for Paul. Rob Hughes commented in his sermon back in May that "your life is important"; one of God's greatest gifts to us is people.

So what is our response?

First, to value the people God has sent us – to recognise their gifts, honour their contributions and notice the risks they take to serve us and to promote the gospel.

Second, to understand the need to look after the welfare of those who serve us. Remember, Jesus said our key characteristic is our love for one another (John 13: 35).

Finally, to consider ourselves as ones who are being sent:

What contributions can we make, big or small?

What risks can we take to serve?

4th Sunday after Trinity: O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that with you as our ruler and guide we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not our hold on things eternal; grant this, heavenly Father, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, 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: July 17th at 2pm in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Bowls: July 17th at 2pm in the Church.
- Coffee and Questions: June 26th & July 24th at 10.30am in the 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>