

**Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2026**

from HOLINESS to WITNESS

St Barnabas | Christ Church | St Wulstans

**ABIDE for Easter 2026**

## **THE STARTING PLACE**

Holiness is a word that can both attract and repel. Some people hear in it the beauty of a life close to God; others hear the weight of judgment or moral pressure. When you hear the word *holiness*, what draws you towards it, and what makes you uneasy about it?

## **LISTENING TO ACTS**

Read [Acts 2:42–47](#). Notice all the ways in which the community practised conspicuous holiness.

## **LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL**

Read [John 10:1–10](#). Jesus speaks about sheep who recognise the shepherd's voice and follow him. What does this image suggest about holiness as belonging?

## **LISTENING TO PETER**

The good Shepherd is not a gentle image but rather one of separation: those who know the shepherd's voice stand out from those who do not. As you read our next passage from Peter, below, take time to notice how holiness creates distinction, distinction creates exposure, and exposure creates accountability.

1 Peter 2:11–3:12

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul. Conduct yourselves honourably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honourable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge. For the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme, or of governors, as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing right you should silence the ignorance of the foolish. As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil. Honour everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honour the emperor.

Slaves, accept the authority of your masters with all deference, not only those who are kind and gentle but also those who are harsh. For it is to your credit if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, where is the credit in that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.' When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the

one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

Wives, in the same way, accept the authority of your husbands, so that, even if some of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives' conduct, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair, and by wearing gold ornaments or fine clothing; rather, let your adornment be the inner self with the lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in God's sight. It was in this way long ago that the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves by accepting the authority of their husbands. Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord. You have become her daughters as long as you do what is good and never let fears alarm you. Husbands, in the same way, show consideration for your wives in your life together, paying honour to the woman as the weaker sex, since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life—so that nothing may hinder your prayers.

Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing. For *'Those who desire life and desire to see good days, let them keep their tongues from evil and their lips from speaking deceit; let them turn away from evil and do good; let them seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.'*

## **THE THRESHOLD**

Think about the places where your life is most visible — work, home, friendships, community. Where might your faith already be speaking for itself, for better or for worse?

## **MOVING FORWARD**

This spring, what might you nurture, and what might you prune back, so that your life bears clearer witness to Good Shepherd you follow?

## A Prayer for this Week

*Good Shepherd, give us courage to live lives that cannot be hidden; that all we do may bear faithful witness to you. Amen.*

There are ABIDE groups this week at the Vicarage

**WEDNESDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> APRIL AT 7PM** and **FRIDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> MAY AT 10.30AM**