

Worship at home – 25th April 2021

Key Scriptures: John 10:11-18

Key Themes:

Jesus the good shepherd.

Call to Worship:

Safe in the knowledge that we are loved, we come to the Good Shepherd seeking succour for our souls.

Amen

Hymn: The Lord is my shepherd.

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.

*And I will trust in You alone,
And I will trust in You alone,
For Your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.*

He guides my ways in righteousness,
And He anoints my head with oil,
And my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.

And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.

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Prayers: Adoration:

Let not the wolf snatch our thoughts and scatter them, for our minds belong to Jesus, and our hearts are open to him.

Lord, we adore you, our Good Shepherd: always there, always watchful.

Your fold is the space you hold for us, where we know we are loved. Although dangers surround us, and in foolishness we may stray, you have our back. So many sheep, yet you know us all by name.

Lord we adore you, our Good Shepherd.

Prayer of Confession:

Lord, are we sheep or are we wolves?

For sometimes it seems that a killer instinct is more valued in this world, and we become one who preys on communities rather than living in community. We may

not be aware of it, for the ways of the world are seductive and we slip into wolves' clothing without thinking.

We make bad choices – how and where we spend our money – not thinking of the exploitation that may have taken place. Lord, Good Shepherd, forgive us these times – when the wolf lurks beneath. Remind us that, as Christians, we are creatures of the fold. Bring us back to the community of love and life as it should be lived.

Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness:

Lord, who lays down your life for your sheep, how can we doubt your forgiveness? Arms once stretched out upon a cross now close in embrace as we return; enfolded, may we know the fullness of love that lives to forgive and forgives that we might live. Amen

Psalm 23 - The Lord Our Shepherd^[a]

23 The LORD is my shepherd;

I have everything I need.

² He lets me rest in fields of green grass
and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.

³ He gives me new strength.

He guides me in the right paths,
as he has promised.

⁴ Even if I go through the deepest darkness,
I will not be afraid, LORD,
for you are with me.

Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.

⁵ You prepare a banquet for me,
where all my enemies can see me;
you welcome me as an honoured guest
and fill my cup to the brim.

⁶ I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life;
and your house will be my home as long as I live.

Reading: John 10:11-18

¹¹ "I am the good shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep. ¹² When the hired man, who is not a shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees a wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away; so the wolf snatches the sheep and scatters them. ¹³ The hired man runs away because he is only a hired man and does not care about the sheep. ¹⁴⁻¹⁵ I am the good shepherd. As the Father knows me and I know the Father, in the same way I know my sheep and they know me. And I am willing to die for them. ¹⁶ There are other sheep which belong to me that are not in this sheep pen. I must bring them, too; they will listen to my voice, and they will become^[a] one flock with one shepherd.

¹⁷ “The Father loves me because I am willing to give up my life, in order that I may receive it back again. ¹⁸ No one takes my life away from me. I give it up of my own free will. I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it back. This is what my Father has commanded me to do.”

Reflection: The voice of the shepherd

I am the voice of the Shepherd, the voice that calls the flock by name. The voice of care and protection, and the voice that welcomes you home.

From the beginning of time, I spoke creation into being, I watched with sadness as my sheep chose to scatter, and walk alone. Then with gladness I gathered them back to myself, fostering relationships, and restoring all that was broken. I put my voice into prophets, priests and kings and enabled them to draw the truth from what they know.

They witnessed power crazed, corrupt Shepherds, high-jacking God’s people, and driving them as slaves into the ground. Put their own interests first, before the wants and needs of others. But this was not my way, and they in turn would know my displeasure and feel my anger. My people would see my fury but taste my forgiveness and love.

For my advocates also saw lone shepherds standing on the hillside, building a fold for his precious sheep. Leading them to good and fertile pastures, where food was abundant, and where the little brook bubbled to form a clear pool of fresh water. He was their guide, and their protector. They trusted him and they know his voice. He was there when the sun shone or when the skies turned black with rain clouds. Everything was under his good care, he was even willing to stand firm when predators attacked. With his body across the entrance, he separated the sheep from the wolves and loved till the end.

I too would become a good shepherd, the people I had formed from dust would become like my sheep. Some would fall by the wayside, get caught in the thicket of life and lose their way. Some would turn out to be wolves in sheep’s clothing, trying to distract and lead others astray. Yet, some would hear the voice of the Shepherd calling them by name, welcoming them into the fold and leading them home.

When trouble or danger approached the hired hand would run for the hills and leave the sheep alone, but I am the Good Shepherd who is willing to lay down my life for these sheep. I promised to take care of them, to show them a life in all its fullness, a life of peace and love, where all were welcomed and held. I spoke of triumph, of death distorted and victory won. Yet they were not just empty words to me. I suffered and died and rose again. I am the good shepherd who laid down my life for my friends and voice of the Shepherd can still be heard, calling your name if only you are willing to listen.

Reflection:

- The New Testament and the meditation talk of good and bad shepherds, I wonder who we might consider to be the good and bad in our context today?

- I wonder who we would consider to be the hired hands that would leave the sheep in times of trouble or danger and run for the hills?
- We are sometimes led astray by wolves in sheep's clothing. Are there people that take us away from our relationship with God?
- Can we sometimes be like the wolves and lead others astray?
- How can we become more like the good shepherd, who leads his sheep to good pastures and still waters.
- Do we know that we are loved and held by God, that we are like sheep that have gone astray but Jesus through his death and resurrection had won us back again?
- Jesus did all that for us, so that we might be welcomed into his sheep fold, that we might hear our names called by the Good Shepherd's voice, so what I wonder might our response be.
- I live live to the full in Christ Jesus.
- I live where we know his protection, love and care, where he feeds us with spiritual food and leads us to the water of eternal life.
- Where filled with the promised Holy Spirit we might be a shepherd to others and show others to the promised land.
- Let us hear his voice calling our name today and respond to him with all that we are.
Amen

Intercessions:

Good Shepherd, we pray for those in need;
The hungry, and the homeless; the victims of warfare; the victims of disasters. We pray for all those trying to alleviate need; Charity and relief workers, peacemakers medical and rescue staff.

In the name of Christ, who gave his life for us:

May your love be known and shown.

Good Shepherd, we pray for those who suffer: the ill and the pain-ridden, the lonely, the bereaved. We pray for all those trying to alleviate suffering: doctors and carers, pastoral visitors, counsellors and concerned friends.

In the name of Christ, who gave his life for us:

May your love be known and shown.

Good Shepherd, we pray for those who are lost;
The regretful and bitter; the underclass of society;
The empty and the despairing.

We pray for those trying to rescue them:

Therapists and counsellors; social and community workers; ministers and missionaries.

Help us to offer those around us forgiveness, acceptance, and the new life of the gospel.

In the name of Christ, who gave his life for us:

May your love be known and shown.

We continue to pray for:
Sarah and Brain Margetts – Dalwood
Gill and Geoff Nicholas – Axminister.
Amen

Hymn: Resurrection Day

[Verse 1]

Because You're risen I can rise
Because You're living I'm alive
Because Your cross is powerful
Because You rose invincible
I can get up off the floor

[Chorus]

This is my resurrection day
Nothing's gonna hold me in the grave
This is my resurrection day
Nothing's gonna hold me down
Say goodbye to my yesterdays
Ever since I met You I am changed
This is my resurrection day
Nothing's gonna hold me down

[Verse 2]

Because You rolled my stone away
Because my debt has all been paid
Because You stand in victory
Because You crushed the enemy
I can get up off the floor (I can get up off the floor)

[Chorus]

This is my resurrection day
Nothing's gonna hold me in the grave
This is my resurrection day
Nothing's gonna hold me down
Say goodbye to my yesterdays
Ever since I met You I am changed
This is my resurrection day
Nothing's gonna hold me down

[Bridge]

The good news is the good news
'Cause You chose the rugged cross
The good news is the good news
'Cause You rose up from the dust
Your gospel is the power
That is saving all of us
So, I can get up off the floor
Come on, get up off the floor

[Chorus]

This is my resurrection day
Nothing's gonna hold me in the grave
This is my resurrection day
Nothing's gonna hold me down
Say goodbye to my yesterdays
Ever since I met You I am changed
This is my resurrection day
Nothing's gonna hold me down
This is my resurrection day
Nothing's gonna hold me in the grave
This is my resurrection day
Nothing's gonna hold me down
Say goodbye to my yesterdays
Ever since I met You I am changed
This is my resurrection day
Nothing's gonna hold me, nothing's gonna hold me down

Blessing:

Everything I am Lord, and everything I do.
Help me to be always more like you.
Teach me to be yours, Lord, Show me when I'm wrong.
Help me to be always more like you.
You accepted all, Lord, help everyone to find the way.
Help me to be always more like you. **Amen**