



## “The Good Shepherd and His Sheep”

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2020

**The Rev'd Dawn Saunders and Deacon Sally Wheadon.**

*This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use as you are unable to attend church. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.*

### **Welcome: The Lighting of a Candle & Call to Worship**

Gracious Father be the blessing that warms us. Precious Son, be the passion that moves us. Holy Spirit, be the power that enables us. Three in one, be our unity, that which joins us. **Amen.**

### **StF 1 All people that on earth**

- 1 All people that on earth do dwell,  
sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;  
him serve with fear, his praise forth tell  
come ye before him, and rejoice.
- 2 The Lord, ye know, is God indeed;  
without our aid he did us make;  
we are his folk, he doth us feed,  
and for his sheep he doth us take.
- 4 For why? the Lord our God is good;  
his mercy is forever sure;  
his truth at all times firmly stood,  
and shall from age to age endure.
- 5 To Father, Son and Holy Ghost,  
the God whom heaven and earth  
adore,  
from men and from the angel-host  
be praise and glory evermore.

*William Kethe, (fl 1559-died 1594) Used By  
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### **Our Prayers: Adoration and Praise**

*Good Shepherd, we lack nothing when we follow your word and your commands. You know our names, our needs, the loads we bear. By your grace you find us where we are, and lead us to quiet waters and greener pastures. For your love, compassion, mercy and grace, Good Shepherd, we bring this offering of praise. **Amen.***



### **Prayers: of Confession.**

*We are your body, your church, your witness in this world - a fact we sometimes forget. When your love is not seen, compassion not shown, grace not revealed, a need unmet, forgive us. Enable our hearts to reflect your love. Enable our hands to respond to need. Enable our voices to bring your peace, that through our lives others may be drawn into your kingdom and your name be lifted high. **Amen.***

**Prayers: of Thanksgiving.**

*For your presence in our lives,  
For the security you offer us,  
For your life that enriches our life,  
For the sense of belonging,  
For our place in your sheepfold,  
great Shepherd of the sheep:  
we praise and adore you. Amen.*

**Today's Psalm 23**

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

**StF 481 The Lord's 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.

**Today's Reading: John 10:1-11  
The Good Shepherd and His Sheep**

<sup>1</sup>“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup>The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.

<sup>3</sup>The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup>When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup>But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.”

<sup>6</sup>Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

<sup>7</sup>Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup>All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. <sup>9</sup>I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. <sup>10</sup>The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

<sup>11</sup>“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life



for the sheep.”

## Time to Reflect:

How would you describe yourself? Have you ever been to a meeting or a training event where you sit in a circle and introduce yourself to the other attendees? The parts of your life that you choose to reveal may well be determined by the event you are attending. A church event might begin - My name is Dawn I am from the Jersey Circuit. Another event might begin - My name is Dawn, I enjoy cricket, Ice Hockey and musical theatre. You get the idea I'm sure.

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Jesus said "I am".  
He said... "I am the Way,  
the truth and life",  
"I am the resurrection  
and the life",  
"I am the gate",  
"I am the bread of life",  
"I am the light of the world",  
"I am the Good Shepherd."  
"I am the true vine

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There was one occasion where Jesus simply said, "I AM".

In Exodus we read

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But Moses said to God, 'If I come to the Israelites and say to them, "The God of your ancestors has sent me to you", and they ask me, "What is his name?" what shall I say to them?' 14 God said to Moses, 'I am who I am'.

(Exodus 3:13-14a)

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I am who I am can also be translated as I will be who I will be. This phrase was used throughout Israel's history. It communicated that message that God always was, always is and always will be. In His use of the 'I am' phrases Jesus is showing his identity, showing Himself as God, God's presence on Earth.

Jesus often used these everyday... these ordinary examples/metaphors to illustrate the eternal. The everyday activities of farmers, fishermen and many others because opportunities for Jesus to illustrate what the Kingdom of God meant for them. In the case of today's reading, it was the village sheepfold. Perhaps a nearby flock caught the attention of Jesus.

The images of shepherd and sheep found in various parts of scripture, including the beginning of Exodus 3 might challenge some of us as this is not an everyday part of our lives. We may at first struggle to understand the parables because the metaphor it is not one that we can relate to. - I will be quite honest with you and say that I really dislike sheep!!

However, imagery using the shepherd was a common one in the ancient world, with kings and gods alike described as shepherds. In the time of this parable the religious leaders would have claimed the title of shepherds of God's flock.

I don't like sheep!  
But they are fascinating.  
And it might help to know a few facts. People say sheep are daft but that isn't actually true, they are quite clever, outgoing and sociable. They do have a natural inclination to follow the leader and have a tendency to congregate close to other sheep, but farmers can exploit this behaviour to keep sheep together in unfenced pastures and it helps to move them from one place to another more easily. Sheep can suffer from stress, especially when separated from their flock. Sheep can recognize individual human and other sheep faces, and remember them for years, and even learn to recognise emotions through facial expressions. They can also learn their own name.

The role of shepherd is to care for and lead the sheep, and a good shepherd knows his sheep. The role of the shepherd had become synonymous with political and spiritual leadership. The reference to a good shepherd would have been seen as a personal criticism of those in leadership who were failing those they served.

In Ezekiel 34, We read about the restoration of Israel, portrayed using the image of a shepherd and his flock. In pace of the false shepherds who were more interested in helping themselves instead of the sheep they were supposed to care for,

leaving them vulnerable and unprotected. God would bring the sheep back to their fold and...

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I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them;

(Ezekiel 34:24-25a)

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In our gospel reading in verse 11 we see Jesus say "I am the good shepherd". It is here and in the following verses that we can witness Jesus outline the cost of shepherding His sheep. That being a good shepherd means that He would lay His life down for His sheep.

There are two challenges for us as members of His flock - To trust and to listen.

Sheep trust their shepherd!  
Where do we put our trust? Do we put our trust in Christ first, or do we doubt sometimes and go our own way, think we know best, or choose the easier route? It takes real faith, to trust Him to lead us, in every decision, and down every path!

In order to follow our Shepherd, we must listen for His voice.

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The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

(John 10:3)

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In the moment when Abraham was going to sacrifice Isaac God called to him by name. The boy Samuel learned to listen to the voice of God after mistaking it for Eli three times. Do you recall hearing the story of the risen Christ, Mary thought she had met a stranger in the garden but then recognised Christ when he called her by name.

I mentioned earlier that sheep can learn their name, but in order to teach them it is a bit like voice recognition in modern gadgets - it is their own shepherd's voice that the sheep come to recognise, they may not respond to the voice of a stranger.

God in Christ knows us all and calls us by name, but we must learn to listen and really hear His call on our lives. We all know that some of the time we are not good listeners!

In several places in scripture we read about Jesus in prayer...

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"Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed"

(Mark 1:35)

"But he would withdraw to deserted places and pray"

(Luke 5:16)

"After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray."

(Mark 6:46)

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If Jesus knew His personal need for constant communication with God and He was the son of God, how much more do you and I need that constant, everyday time where we're together with the Lord. Listening for His voice. It is important to remember that prayer is a conversation not a monologue, it isn't just a help-line or a request service. It is a means of communication and a way to listen and hear.

The Methodist Church website reads...

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The Conference has declared 2020/2021 a year of prayer so that our Church-wide commitments to evangelism, church growth, church at the margins, and pioneering and church planting will flow from a deep, contemplative orientation to God's grace and love. Be part of this movement of prayer as we ask the Holy Spirit to help us be a growing, evangelistic, inclusive, justice-seeking Church of gospel people.

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There will be a weekly online prayer meeting every Tuesday at 12.45 for 25 minutes and you can sign up on the Methodist website. [www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk). For local events: worship and prayer and learning opportunities locally, check newsletters,

notices and our own circuit website.

This is a new church year and we have an opportunity to begin afresh with a renewed commitment to prayer and service and to be a visible presence within our communities. We are privileged to be able to do more and go beyond prayer. By listening to the voice of our shepherd he will lead us in right paths, and we can walk with Him and show His love.

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...and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8

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SoF (3) 1377 Jesus, be the centre,

1 Jesus, be the centre,  
be my source, be my light,  
Jesus.

2 Jesus, be the centre,  
be my hope, be my song,  
Jesus.

*Be the fire in my heart,  
be the wind in these sails,  
be the reason that I live,  
Jesus, Jesus.*

3 Jesus, be my vision,  
be my path, be my guide,  
Jesus.

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**Prayers: of Intercessions.**

*Eternal, ever-living God,  
we pray for those who this day need  
our prayers:*

*those we see around us...  
those who remain in isolation...  
family and friends near and far...*

*strangers and communities we will  
never meet or know,  
but whose peril we hear of and see on  
our screens...*

*those whose life is ebbing away  
consumed by old age, frailty, illness or  
neglect...*

*those who grieve deeply for lives and  
loves lost...  
those who experience oppression or  
discrimination...*

*those who feel forgotten, unnoticed,  
unloved, unmissed...  
Lord God, in your abundance of mercy,  
hear these and all our prayers. Amen.*

## StF 323

I will sing the wondrous story  
Of the Christ who died for me,  
How he left his home in glory  
For the cross on Calvary:

*Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story  
Of the Christ who died for me,  
Sing it with the saints in glory,  
Gathered by the crystal sea.*

I was lost; but Jesus found me,  
Found the sheep that went astray,  
Raised me up, and gently led me  
Back into the narrow way:

Days of darkness still come o'er me;  
Sorrow's paths I often tread;  
But the Saviour still is with me,  
By his hand I'm safely led:

He will keep me till the river  
Rolls its waters at my feet;  
Then he'll bear me safely over,  
Where the loved ones I shall meet:

*Francis H Rowley (1854-1952)*

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## A Sending Out Prayer & blessing

*Go out into the world.  
Go where God leads you.  
Go that you may serve him.  
And wherever you go, know that  
God is with you. Amen.*

*And the blessing of God Almighty,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with  
you and all whom you love and all  
those you are called to love, this  
day and for evermore. Amen.*



Join us for a post service Coffee & Chat,  
on the phone by dialing

**02203 481 5240**

Meeting ID: **878 0011 0669 #**

Participants ID: #

Password: **336542**



