

Teddington Circuit Worship Sheets

Sunday 25th April 2021

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

Lord God, wherever we may be we approach you now as your people, and the sheep of your pasture. We enter your gates with thanksgiving, and your courts with praise, for your steadfast love endures forever.
AMEN

Hymn: The Lord's my shepherd StF481

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://youtu.be/pN4tPkX0MG0>

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.

Stuart Townend (b. 1963)

Let us pray together

Almighty and eternal God, glorious in power and purity, we adore you.

Creator and Lord of the universe, we are amazed that you care for us, and when we were far off, you sought us in Christ, to bring us back to the fold of your love.

Forgive us that we still sometimes turn away from you like lost sheep.

Draw us back to you, we pray, assure us of your love, and enable us to share your love with others; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN

Today's Gospel Reading: John 10: 11 - 18

Time to Reflect

Just imagine the scene: the Pandemic is over and you're at a dinner party (remember them?) and there's a lull in the conversation. The silence encourages a bright spark to ask you "what sort of animal best matches your personality?" Everyone turns to you to await your answer. They assume that you will pick something wise like an owl, or graceful like a racehorse or even something powerful like a tiger. But what you actually say is "a sheep".

There are guffaws and several rude remarks, and your partner starts looking attentively at their wristwatch!

Why would you want to be thought of as a sheep? O.K., lambs are quite cute, but aren't sheep dirty, smelly, and rather stupid, only suitable for winter jumpers and Sunday lunch!

Yet, Christians for hundreds of years have been happy to think of themselves as part of Jesus' flock. Why?

The simple truth is that the image of Jesus as our shepherd is incredibly powerful.

Paintings, poems, psalms, and hymns have powerfully ingrained this Gospel image into our faith.

Indeed, the idea of leaders shepherding people for God stretches right back over the Old Testament. Just think how many key figures were shepherds at some point in their lives: Moses, Abraham, Jacob, Isaac, David to name but a few.

Leaders, rulers, and Kings who failed to lead their people well were condemned as bad shepherds. Ezekiel writes, "Woe betide Israel's Shepherds who care only for themselves" Ezekiel 34: 2.

It's not surprising then that Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-18).

We should note that there are two New Testament Greek words for "good". The first is "agathos" which describes the moral quality of a thing. The second is "kalos" which means goodness that includes a sense of being beautiful. Kalos is the word that Jesus uses of himself. Now, the beautiful here does not refer to

what Jesus looked like. It is about the sheer attractiveness of what the shepherd was doing.

Good/kalos means noble, ideal, or model. It's the characteristic we want for all Christian leaders.

What a great way to talk about our leaders, using a word coined by Jesus himself. It's a robust, rugged word, and it's about being prepared to genuinely care for the flock.

There's plenty of challenge in being a Christian leader/shepherd today. But there is also a challenge to all of us in this famous passage about our Good Shepherd. In John 10:16 Jesus says:

"I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd".

Wow! Jesus has 'other' sheep, and he's going to call them too. What does this mean? Who are these other sheep?

It could simply mean that Jesus is referring to the inclusion of both Jews and Gentiles in his flock. An image of spiritual unity, drawn together by Jesus' love.

However, some Bible scholars have suggested a rather mind-blowing alternative way of understanding this verse. In order to get a feel for this way of interpreting the passage let me share a Biblical story with you. It goes a little like this. Back in Exodus 17 Moses and the Israelites have left captivity in Egypt in search of the promised land, and it's not going well. They have run out of water and are more than a little angry with Moses, who they claim has brought them out into the wilderness to die of thirst.

Moses turns to God, who instructs him to strike a rock with his staff in front of all the people. He does, and out of the rock comes water. Moses and his people go on, and we don't hear about the rock again. Well, not until 1000 years later!

In a letter to the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 10:1) Paul refers to this story about the rock and writes that the rock was Christ!

Jesus was the rock! How is that?

Jesus is not mentioned in the story, but Paul insists that Christ was present, providing the water, he was the rock.

This way of looking at this passage helps us to question where else has Christ been present, when else, with who else, how else. John begins his Gospel

by claiming that through Jesus "all things are made". And guess what? We don't understand all that Jesus has done or doing.

Jesus is bigger than any claims of exclusive ownership by whatever church or denomination. The all-embracing, all saving love of Christ will not be controlled by narrow definitions.

Jesus leaves the door open for all of us to join his flock. He calls us by name. In every language and in every age.

In our moments of loneliness, isolation, alienation, and hopelessness the Good Shepherd responds to our deepest yearning. He brings us together, close to him, united in his love,

He is calling now. Listen for your name. Join the flock. Be loved, be saved.

Mark Gilks

Hampton Mission Partnership

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you that in Jesus you have given us a Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. We pray for those who give of themselves and take risks to serve others who are suffering or in danger. Grant them courage and endurance, and time for rest and refreshment.

We thank you for the compassion of the Good Shepherd, leading his sheep to still waters and safe pasture. We pray for those who work among the poor peoples of the world and care for the victims of abuse and neglect. Grant them determination, patience and empathy, and strength to go on in the face of disappointment.

We thank you for the love of the Good Shepherd, who knows his sheep by name. We pray for those engaged in the pastoral care of the church. Grant them wisdom, understanding, listening ears and caring hearts.

We remember people we know who are facing times of difficulty or anxiety, sickness or sorrow. We pray that they may know the presence of the Good Shepherd and find in him comfort, strength, peace, healing and hope.

We pray for ourselves, that we may hear the call of the Good Shepherd in our own lives, and follow, joyfully and trustingly, in his way of love.

We ask it in his name and for his sake. AMEN

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

**Hymn: In heavenly love abiding StF736
or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind**

<https://youtu.be/sT0r9DaGbmQ>

In heavenly love abiding,
no change my heart shall fear;
and safe is such confiding,
for nothing changes here:
the storm may roar without me,
my heart may low be laid;
but God is round about me,
and can I be dismayed?

Wherever he may guide me,
no want shall turn me back;
my Shepherd is beside me,
and nothing can I lack:
his wisdom ever waketh,
his sight is never dim;
he knows the way he taketh,
and I will walk with him.

Green pastures are before me,
which yet I have not seen;
bright skies will soon be o'er me,
where darkest clouds have been;
my hope I cannot measure,
my path to life is free;
my Saviour has my treasure,
and he will walk with me.

Anna Laetitia Waring (1823-1910)

Based on psalm 23

A prayer of blessing

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. AMEN

(Hebrews 13: 20 – 21, Authorized Version)

Original materials by John Barnett

All

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Bible Reading: John 10: 11 – 18 (NRSV)

[Jesus said] "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away – and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."