

# 8<sup>th</sup> May 2022 – Morning Service

## The Good Shepherd

Rev Peter Bradley

### Call to Worship Psalm 23:1-4

The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need. He lets me rest in fields of green grass and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water. He gives me new strength. He guides me in the right paths, as he has promised. 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.

### StF 8 – God with us: Creator, Father

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| 1) God with us: Creator, Father,<br>Bringing everything to birth;<br>Mother of the whole creation,<br>Fire of stars and life of earth:<br>Down the countless years composing,<br>From the earth's evolving night,<br>Love's response to love, and forming<br>Mind and soul to seek your light.         | 3) God with us: Unweari'd Spirit,<br>From the birth of time and space,<br>Surging through unconscious being,<br>Joyful, Life-Creating Grace:<br>Through the centuries you find us;<br>You, as God, inspire our prayer;<br>Life and Power at work within us,<br>Love for ever, everywhere!        |
| 2) God with us: Redeemer, Brother,<br>Friend for ever at our side,<br>Here, in flesh, you walked among us,<br>Taking up your cross, you died.<br>Crucified, despised, rejected,<br>Perfect Love, who shared our shame,<br>Streaming from the cross, your judgement,<br>Full of mercy, clears our name. | 4) God, Transcendent, far beyond us,<br>Closest Friend, unfailing Guide:<br>Through the ages, wronged, affronted,<br>In your poor, still crucified!<br>God with us: convict, forgive us;<br>By your holy love destroy<br>All that hinders peace and justice:<br>Fill this aching world with joy! |

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### Prayer of Adoration

Glory to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Glory to God the Father, whose goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life.  
Glory to God the Son, the Good Shepherd, who knows his sheep by name, and laid down his life for them.  
Glory to God the Spirit, who guides us in the way of Christ and gathers us into his Church.  
Glory to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

### Prayer of Confession

God our Shepherd, you alone make us dwell in safety. Yet, like lost sheep, we have wandered from your ways. We have failed to hear your voice. We have tried to live without you.  
Pardon our wilful disobedience, our arrogance and pride; restore our souls and lead us in right paths for your name's sake; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## Reading: Acts 9:36-43

In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. About that time she became ill and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, 'Please come at once!'

Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood round him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning towards the dead woman, he said, 'Tabitha, get up.' She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.

## StF 481 – The Lord's my shepherd

1) 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.

*Ch) 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.*

2) 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.

3) 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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## Reading: John 10:22-30

Then came the Festival of Dedication[a] at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon's Colonnade. The Jews who were there gathered round him, saying, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.'

Jesus answered, 'I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all[b]; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.'

## Sermon

There was once a small dog called Nipper. The dog was a loyal friend of his master, who was called Mark. When Mark called, Nipper came running. But tragedy struck, and Mark died, leaving Nipper all alone. Mark's brother, Francis, adopted the little dog, and also inherited a box of his brother's belongings. In the box, was a cylinder phonograph and recordings of Mark's voice. When he played the recordings, it was as if Mark was there in the room. Nipper went and sat close to the phonograph, listening to his master's voice. Francis, who was an artist, decided to commit the scene to canvas, and in 1899 the picture was acquired by a newly formed gramophone company. You can probably guess its name! The picture that Francis Barrand painted was about listening – and about voice recognition.

Perhaps we sometimes wonder what Jesus' voice was like. Would we recognise him speaking if we could somehow miraculously obtain a recording of him? We know so many of his words – his stories, his parables, his conversations. We know of his life, his death, and his glorious resurrection – but what did he sound like? It's generally agreed by historians that Jesus and his disciples primarily spoke Aramaic, the common language of Judea in the first century AD, most likely a Galilean dialect distinguishable from that of Jerusalem.

But we learn nothing of the sound of his voice. Was it authoritative? Did it lilt? Was it loud or quiet? High or low? We just don't know. We can probably assume that there must have been some quality in Jesus' speaking voice that made people listen. We know that people have been listening to him ever since, and people have been responding to his call. But that is an inward voice – we simply cannot speak of inflection or timbre.

It is recorded in Luke's Gospel that Jesus stood up in the Temple and unrolled the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and read from it – and people listened. He was, after all, a preacher and teacher. His sermon on the mount and many of his dialogues also suggest he was a natural raconteur, a story teller, a public speaker – it's obvious that he could hold people's attention.

It is equally clear that he made people laugh and cry, but his voice also had power to heal sick and raise the dead to life – remember Jairus' daughter, and the raising of Lazarus? He orders demons to leave people; and his voice turned water into wine, and created enough food to feed 5000 from 5 loaves and 2 fish. Then, in the garden on Easter Day, we see Mary Magdalene, whose eyes are blinded by her tears. She cannot see Jesus standing there – she thinks him to be the gardener, but when he says, "Mary", she immediately recognises him. The same is true in another resurrection appearance, at Emmaus. As Jesus broke bread and spoke a blessing, the eyes of the two disciples were opened. Then they remembered that, as he opened the scriptures to them, their hearts were warmed within them. Perhaps, then, we should no longer say that "seeing is believing" – perhaps we ought to say "hearing is believing"!

And so we come to today's Gospel reading. John tells us that Jesus is questioned by the Jewish rulers, and he says to them "My sheep listen to my voice, I know them, and they follow me." Jesus speaks, and people follow. This is true, yesterday, today, and for all eternity. Jesus still speaks to us, and if we choose to listen, the Good Shepherd promises to lead us through our life's journey from beginning to end, through green pastures, beside still waters and in the right paths. Even when we walk through the darkest valleys, we are still called onwards until we reach the house of the Lord where we will dwell for ever.

In the Book of Revelation, it takes this idea of the Psalmist a step further. It tells us that Christ is both the Good Shepherd, and the lamb who sits on the throne of God. The lamb that was slain becomes the Lamb who leads us all to that place where we will hunger and thirst no more, and every tear shall be wiped away from our eyes. Christ the Good Shepherd leads us through life, through death, and into the life to come. His voice calls us, and leads us onwards on every step of our journey.

Today, the fourth Sunday of Easter, is traditionally called "Good Shepherd Sunday". It is also known these days as "Vocations Sunday". The word 'Vocation' comes from a Latin word which means 'call' or 'summons'. It is appropriate, then, to consider Christ's call to each one of us. We are presumably here because Christ has called us already, but what is he now calling us to be and to do? Will we follow him when he calls our name? Do we recognise our Master's voice?

Christ does not stop calling those who have ears to listen.

## StF 673 – Will you come and follow me

- 1) Will you come and follow Me if I but  
call your name?  
Will you go where you don't know and  
never be the same?  
Will you let My love be shown?  
Will you let My name be known,  
Will you let My life be grown in you and  
you in Me?
- 2) Will you leave yourself behind if I but  
call your name?  
Will you care for cruel and kind and never  
be the same?  
Will you risk the hostile stare  
Should your life attract or scare?  
Will you let Me answer prayer in you and  
you in Me?
- 3) Will you let the blinded see if I but  
call your name?  
Will you set the prisoners free and never  
be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean  
And do such as this unseen,  
And admit to what I mean in you and you in Me?
- 4) Will you love the 'you' you hide if I but  
call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside and never  
be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found  
To reshape the world around,  
Through My sight and touch and sound in  
you and you in Me?
- 5) Lord, Your summons echoes true when You but  
call my name,  
Let me turn and follow You and never  
be the same.  
In Your company I'll go  
Where Your love and footsteps show  
Thus I'll move and live and grow in You  
and You in me.

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## Prayers of Intercession

Good Shepherd, we ask you to be our guide: lead us out of darkness, lead us out of trouble, lead us out of fear, lead us out of death, and bring us to the fullness of life eternal. We rejoice with the whole company of heaven and say, "Salvation belongs to our God." We pray for all pastors and those who have the care of your people; we remember those who are spiritual directors and counsellors. Faithful shepherd, lead us from darkness to light, from death to life eternal.

We pray for all who direct the minds of the young, for teachers, and for all who broadcast through radio and television. We give thanks and pray for those who provide us with food through farming and agriculture, and for those who provide for us in shops and supermarkets. Faithful shepherd, lead us from darkness to light, from death to life eternal.

We remember before you all who have been our teachers and guides. We pray for our local schools and places of learning. And we ask your blessing upon our communities, our homes and our loved ones. We pray for all who have lost direction, for all who have lost faith in themselves, in the world and in their God. We pray for the despondent, the disillusioned and the despairing, for all who feel desperate or distressed, that they may know that God seeks for them and loves them.

We pray for our world, and especially those places where there is conflict. We remember especially the people of Ukraine, particularly those whose homes have been destroyed, and who are having to leave the land that they love to seek shelter elsewhere. We pray for your peace.

We pray for all who are ill or struggling at this time, especially those who are known to us .....[*Silence*]  
We rejoice that you lead us through the valley of the shadow of death and offer us life eternal.  
Faithful shepherd, lead us from darkness to light, from death to eternal life. **Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the  
glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

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.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are  
yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

## StF 679 – Come build the church

- 1) Come, build the Church - not heaps of stone  
In safe, immobile, measured walls,  
But friends of Jesus, Spirit-blown,  
And fit to travel where he calls.
- 2) Come, occupy with glad dissent  
Where death and evil fence the ground,  
And pitch a Resurrection-Tent  
Where peace is lived, and love is found.
- 3) Exposed upon the open ground  
To screams of war in East and West,  
Our ears will catch a deeper sound:  
The weeping of the world's oppressed.
- 4) In wearied face, or frightened child,  
In all they know, and need to say,  
The living Christ shall stand revealed.  
Come, let us follow and obey!

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## Blessing

The faithful Shepherd protect you from all evil, strengthen you with his goodness, lead you to the fullness of his love; And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you, this day and for ever more.  
**Amen.**