

26th April Easter 4 Good Shepherd
2020 Facebook live

Welcome and Introduction

Good morning and a warm welcome to the vicarage and to this service on the fourth Sunday of Easter.

The Weekly sheet is on the All Saints Website together with regular updates about church life and various resources.

On this Sunday each year we hear a part of the tenth chapter of John's gospel. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. In the reading Jesus compares his love for his disciples to the love of a shepherd for his sheep.

And so, as we gather...knowing as the BCP puts it, that we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, so let us call to mind those things for which we seek God's healing and forgiveness.

Confession

Lord, with you as our shepherd, there is nothing we shall want. Lord, have mercy...

Lord, even if we should walk in the valley of darkness, we will fear no evil, because you are with us, Christ have mercy...

Lord, in your own house we will dwell for ever and ever.

Lord, have mercy....

Absolution

May the God of love and power forgive you and free you from your sins, heal and strengthen you by his Spirit, and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen**

In a moment of silence let us bring to God our hopes and concerns for today and the days ahead....

Collect

O God, you never cease to call even those far away,
for it is your will that all be drawn into one fold.
Attune our ears to the voice of the Good Shepherd,
who leads us always to you, that we may find under your
tender protection life in all its fullness.
We ask this through Jesus Christ, the resurrection and the
life, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy
Spirit, God for ever and ever. **Amen**

Gospel

Alleluia! Christ is risen! *He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.
Glory to you, O Lord. (10:1-10)

Jesus said to the Pharisees: 'Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.' Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So again Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.'

Alleluia! Christ is risen! *He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*



In the name....

There are many types of gate; different sizes, different materials, there are logic gates and toll gates.

I was speaking with a senior member of the congregation a couple of days ago and he was telling me that he has gone no further than his garden gate – during this time of lock down. By being on the inside of our gates and doors we help to keep ourselves safe.

Gates allow access; they may be there to keep people or animal in – or they may be there to keep people or animal out.

I could have been on Iona for the week. It is a good place for a retreat – a time to combine attending services, hearing meditations and going on walks around the island. There are plenty of sheep! I've used images of sheep taken on Iona to illustrate this service on Facebook – images of cute lambs and curious sheep.

The uplands of Judea were, like Iona, more suited to rearing sheep and goats than to growing crops. The shepherd was a familiar figure; rugged, he had to make sure his sheep did not get lost, so this kept him alert and watchful, it was not an easy life. The shepherd cared for his sheep – protecting them from wild animals, and from thieves and robbers.

So to protect the sheep, they were often penned in a stone walled sheepfold. The entrance was a single opening – with no gate – the shepherd acted as gate keeper and stayed across the entrance to protect the sheep. So in a sense no one could enter except going through the shepherd. So when Jesus describes himself as the 'gate' and the 'shepherd', this is the same person.

Often flocks were mixed together so that the shepherds could come together and support each other and enjoy fellowship. When the sheep had to be separated, the shepherd could call his and they would follow him. Shepherds did not drive their sheep, the shepherd led and the sheep followed. The shepherd knew his sheep and they knew him. They had a relationship with each other.

The image of the shepherd is a great Biblical image. (Jesus came into a world of darkness and despair. People 'erred and strayed like lost sheep'. There were those who had themselves trapped and could not free themselves. Others were in danger of being robbed of their well-being, their joy and even their life.) 'I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full'. We have the hope of eternal life. Jesus is the gate to life and to eternal life. When Jesus talks of eternal life; he means a quality of life which we can experience here and now, which will continue into eternity.

As we journey through life we seek to know God's love for us and to love God, and our neighbour as ourselves. Love is stronger than death. This fullness of life here on earth is a foretaste of what is to come.

Sometimes Christianity has been seen as being about restrictions and prohibitions. People may have been brought up with the thinking that Christians should be detached from the world; that this present life is just a time of trial and enjoyment of life is to be discouraged. It was as if we were

penned in, living cautiously, and fearfully. It ought to be possible to enjoy life to the fullest while being devout and faithful at the same time. Living life to the full is not the same as to live it up! The gate is not to hem us in but is to allow travel – the gate leads to the world and to life.

Life is a precious gift. Every moment is unique. At this time of being penned in can be a time to concentrate our attention on what we are experiencing, what we value and what gives life now and in the future.

The good shepherd wants us to have life. May we value the security he provides, his leadership, and may we be protected from fear. May we live whatever life presents to us – knowing the gift of God that it is. (We are meant to live. It is well-known that those who have lived fully and intensely do not feel cheated at death. It has been said, 'Fear not that your life will end; rather fear that it may never have begun.)

Jesus began his ministry with these words, 'Believe in the Good News'. What is the Good News? The Good News is, 'I came that you may have life and have it to the full'.
In the name....

Intercessions:

Lord in your mercy....

We pray for the elderly, for those who are in Care Homes, and all who are coming to the end of their earthly journey.

We pray that you will protect us in our journey, until we share with the saints in your kingdom.

Our father.....

Concluding prayer and Blessing:

Merciful Father,
you gave your Son Jesus Christ to be the good shepherd,
and in his love for us to lay down his life and rise again:
keep us always under his protection, and give us grace to
follow in his steps; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

God, who through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ
has given us the victory, give you joy and peace in your
faith; and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Go in the peace of Christ, Alleluia, alleluia!
Thanks be to God, alleluia, alleluia!

Notices:

Weekly Sheet and other resources on the All Saints' website
Email list – let me know if you wish to be on that.

<https://allsaintspeterborough.org.uk/covid-19/>

Daily Hope the line, which is available 24 hours a day on
0800 804 8044, If you know of someone who isn't on
internet, let them know, ...

Online collection:

<https://allsaintspeterborough.org.uk/about/giving/>

11 am Premier of the choir singing Wesley's Lead me Lord

Evensong 5.30 pm, OoS on the website
Eucharist 11 am Tuesday Zoom
Prayer Group 7 pm Thursday, Zoom
Coffee morning 11 am Saturday, Zoom
Sunday 10.30 and 5.30