**SUNDAY SERVICE MAY 3RD 2020**











ST MICHAEL’S CHURCH HOOLE

**JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD**

***“I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.”*** *John 10v10*

**Welcome to our service this morning. The risen Jesus is also the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for us His sheep and comes to bring us life in all it fullness. What an amazing promise for us today.**

**EASTER GREETING**:

We are risen with Christ

**The Lord is risen**

Eternal life is ours

**The Lord is risen**

Death has met its master

**The Lord is risen**

The way to heaven is open

**The Lord is risen**

He is risen indeed

**Alleluia! Amen**

**HYMN**  Our first hymn is a great hymn of praise to the risen Lord Jesus for dying for us on the cross: I will sing the Wondrous Story of the King who died for me. [https://youtu.be/nAcpYr9I6Tk](about:blank)

1. I will sing the wondrous story  
   Of the Christ Who died for me;  
   How He left His home in glory  
   For the cross of Calvary.
   * *Refrain:*  
     *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.*
2. 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.
3. 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.

**Let us pray:**

**PRAYER OF THE WEEK:**

**Risen Christ, faithful shepherd of your Father’s sheep:**

**teach us to hear your voice and to follow your command,**

**that all your people may be gathered into one flock,**

**to the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

**BIBLE READING John 10: v 1-18.**

**“I am the Good Shepherd. I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”.**

The Good Shepherd and His sheep

‘Very truly I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 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. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognise a stranger’s voice.’ Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

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

‘I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

‘I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep 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 are not of this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life – only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.’

**SERMON**

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, we ask that as we look at Your Word, so you will show us something more of Your love, care and compassion. Amen

Well, how amazing is that? Who would have thought that a man on his hundredth birthday would have raised over 30 million pounds for the NHS, and at the same time have a number one record in the charts? I know that none of you are betting folks, but if you had walked into Ladbrokes on January 1st, asking to place a bet on either of these possibilities, let alone both, no one would have given you any odds!

I found Thursday’s television very moving, particularly because my own father went out to India, then Burma, to fight alongside the Ghurkas from 1941 to 1945; and to my shame I had never before seen such detailed footage of the fighting in the Burmese jungles during the second world war. We will be thinking more about that next weekend, when the VE Day celebrations take place. But what an amazing day last Thursday was, and all the more wonderful for being so unexpected, so exceptional.

In John 10, Jesus’ hearers also had to take in something that was totally unexpected. In this chapter, Jesus gives Himself two titles, two descriptions: “I am the Gate” and “I am the Good Shepherd.” They are both so important that Jesus repeats them: ”I am the Gate, I am the Good Shepherd.”

Actually the two titles link together. Although the usual situation was for the shepherd to look after the sheep during the day, and then hand over to a watchman to supervise at night, there were instances when the shepherd at the end of the day would herd the sheep into the fold for night time security, and then himself lie across the entrance, acting as a door to keep them in at night as well as a gate to come in by.

Now when Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd, part of that could have been expected from the Old Testament. Referring to King David, Psalm 78 says this: “The Lord chose David His servant, and took him from the sheep pens; from tending the sheep He brought him to be the shepherd of His people Israel”. So they should have been looking for a Shepherd descended from David sent by God. But Jesus tells them something quite unexpected, something they were certainly not anticipating, and we will look at that in a moment.

For the present, we will examine three aspects that Jesus highlights concerning the relationship between sheep and shepherd, which will apply to Jesus and His followers.

1. This relationship is intimate

The sheep listen to His voice. He calls His sheep by name and He leads them out. They know His voice. Then applying it further, Jesus says “I know my sheep and my sheep know me, just as the Father knows me.” It is that close, that intimate.

I once attended a church where the pastor himself had been a shepherd in his younger days. He described how, if he met up with another flock and shepherd, they would walk along for a bit, and the sheep would intermingle. When they arrived at their destination they then had a terrible job separating the sheep out (this was before the days of branding sheep). Much later this pastor went to Israel and watched as two shepherds walked along with their flocks together. Eventually they separated, and the two shepherds called out the names they had for their sheep –eg long ears, black nose, whatever, The sheep recognised the voice of their own shepherd, and separated quite naturally. My sheep, says Jesus, know my voice and my sheep know me. Jesus’ relationship with His people is intimate.

1. This relationship is enriching, fulfilling, productive.

v.10 – “I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full.” And this is only natural. If God made you, then He knows what is best for you. The way to be fulfilled, the way to find life is to go God’s way. The way to be unfulfilled, unsatisfied is to abandon God’s way, desert God. The Prodigal Son thought he was heading for life by taking his father’s money and heading for the bright lights of the city – friends, parties, alcohol, living it up. He soon found out that that was not life to the full. We only find life, the life God created us for, by walking with Jesus, by having Jesus as our Lord, our Saviour, our Master and our Friend.

3) There was a cost to this relationship.

And it was the cost that was so unexpected, that His listeners were not anticipating. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. Some of us have been watching the Christianity Explored videos, going through Mark’s Gospel. The pattern is exactly the same. In Mark 1-8, the disciples find out that Jesus is the Messiah, and the Apostle Peter declares this magnificently in Mark 8. But the disciples cannot understand that Jesus must be a suffering Messiah , One who came to die.

But Jesus is adamant – the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. The relationship with Jesus can only exist on the basis of His death, procuring our forgiveness, setting us free and giving us life. Jesus offers His followers a relationship that the Good Shepherd has with His sheep

– it is intimate . We know Jesus’ voice, and we hear it every time we read the Bible.

* It is enriching . Jesus came to give us life, and we can only find that life in Him.
* It is costly. It is His death that has won for us forgiveness, freedom and salvation.

Let me end with a story. High on the moors in the Welsh highlands, 2 ministers met a young shepherd boy who had impaired hearing and was illiterate. They explained that Jesus wanted to b*e his* *shepherd,* who would always look after him as he, the boy, looked after the sheep. They taught him to repeat the words “The Lord is *my* shepherd(Psalm 23 v 1), using the fingers and thumb of his right hand to help him remember, starting with his thumb and then a finger for each word. They told him to pause at the fourth word “my” and remember that this Psalm was meant for *him.*

Some years later, one of them was passing through that same village and asked after the shepherd boy. The previous winter there had been terrible storms, and the boy had died on the hills , buried in a snowdrift. The villager who was telling the story said “There was one thing, however, that we didn’t understand. When he was discovered, he was *holding the fourth finger of* *his right hand.”*

The Good Shepherd is us with through this life, even through the valley of the shadow of death and into the next.

Let us pray. Lord, we thank you for laying down your life for your sheep, and for the life that you now offer us. Amen

**HYMN** Our next hymn continues the theme of Jesus the good shepherd. It is a modern version of the 23rd Psalm-the Lord’s my Shepherd [https://youtu.be/pN4tPkX0MG0](about:blank)

**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.

*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.

**The Apostles' Creed**

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.  
  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.

**PRAYERS**

Lord we pray individually and collectively as we learn to deal with the repercussions from the pandemic we find ourselves in and Lord, we pray that your church will be strengthened at this time

Please help us to be strong and sure in our faith and we particularly thank you for the support of our Ministers, Bishops and Archbishops

Lord, may we learn to listen for your voice; may we have the openness to recognise your voice; may we learn to be your good sheep and show us how we can follow you closely, rather than wandering off your path. Lord, please lead us to the life you offer - life in all its fullness

Lord in your mercy Hear our prayer

Lord, help us to manage our lives well in this unprecedented time of lockdown. Please guide us how to care for others and we thank you for the compassion and understanding that friends/ relatives/ carers are showing to each other to keep everyone safe. Help everyone to follow the advice given and guide our leaders down the safest path for all.

Lord in your mercy Hear our prayer

Today dear Lord, we pray for local charities who are still providing support, extra food and comfort for individuals and families in these difficult times, especially when funding and donations are diminishing. We thank you for such special people as Captain Tom who are making such an impact on our lives.

Internationally, may the wealthier countries still give their support and expertise to help the poorer nations. We particularly ask you to watch over the orphaned and vulnerable children in Malawi who are supported by FOMO. We ask that with your love, all those working to relieve suffering and hardship may be strengthened in their efforts.

Lord in your mercy Hear our prayer

We thank you for the continued dedication and appreciation of our NHS staff and all key workers. Please Lord, send your love for the elderly or infirm living in care homes, for patients who are unwell and scared in hospitals, for all families who are kept apart in times of uncertainty and illness and especially for those who have not been able to say their goodbyes or to celebrate the lives of lost loved ones. We pray especially for the sick in our own congregation- for Nancy Mawdesley and Pearl Read. Let’s have a moment of silence now as we bring to the Good Shepherd those known to us who are suffering in any way.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, Amen

We join now in the prayer Jesus taught His followers to pray:

**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**

**HYMN** Our final hymn is one of praise to the Lord Jesus the source of all light, immortality and life everlasting – Name of all Majesty. [https://youtu.be/COLt5pFH8K](about:blank)

1. Name of all majesty,  
fathomless mystery,  
King of the ages  
by angels adored;  
power and authority,  
splendour and dignity,  
bow to his mastery,  
Jesus is Lord!  
  
2Child of our destiny,  
God from eternity,  
love of the Father  
on sinners outpoured;  
see now what God has done  
sending his only Son,  
Christ the beloved One,  
Jesus is Lord!  
  
2. Saviour of Calvary,  
costliest victory,  
darkness defeated  
and Eden restored;  
born as a man to die,  
nailed to a cross on high,  
cold in the grave to lie,  
Jesus is Lord!  
  
4. God shpherdSource of all sovereignty,  
light, immortality,  
life everlasting  
and heaven assured;  
so with the ransomed, we  
praise him eternally,  
Christ in his majesty,  
Jesus is Lord!

**BLESSING**

May the Love of the Lord Jesus the Good Shepherd draw you to Himself

May the Power of the Lord Jesus strengthen you to serve Him

And may the Joy of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts

And so may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and all those whom you love, now and for evermore. Amen

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