

Sunday 3rd May 2020 Easter 4 (Revd Debbie Poole, with Deacon Sally & Revd Danny 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

Opening Prayer:

Holy God,
We come because we know we are welcome;
We come because you call us by name;
We come together to offer our worship, O God.
We come in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Hymn: I will sing the wondrous Story: (StF 323)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAcpYr9I6Tk>

- 1) I will sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me,
How he left the realms of glory
For the cross on Calvary:
*Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me,
Sing it with his 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:

*Francis H Rowley (1854-1952) © HarperCollins Religious
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Prayer of Adoration (Helen Cooke: St Aubin))

Let us pray.

Faithful, unchanging God, bless this our offering of praise and worship. As we step forward with joy and sing of the wondrous story of the Christ who died for us. And as you call us, let us, this day, respond to you anew. You, who call us to shine brightly so others might be drawn into your glorious kingdom. Let our lives be a testimony to your love. Let our stories be so mingled with yours that we are a beacon of your love.

As you equip us, let us step forward boldly. Bless us with the gifts required for tasks already prepared for us, empower us to become your faithful servants in this time and place, and wherever you may send us.

For we give you thanks, as even in these strange days there is much for us to be thankful for. We see communities growing stronger. We see neighbours caring for one another. We see families spending time together. We see people walking new paths and exploring the beauty found on their doorstep. We see your amazing creation with new eyes.

But father we know that we do not always walk your path. Reflected in your eyes I see all my love and all my lies; all my promise and all my pride; all my fear and all my fight; all my dread and my denial

Father we know that dark days may still lay before us and that we will again tread sorrow's path. Open our hearts to feel your presence as you reach your guiding hand to us. Open our eyes to see your face shining through the darkness.

And yes, I will sing again of the wondrous story of the Christ who died for me. For I was lost; but you have found me, you have found the sheep that went astray. You have raised me up, reached out your hand and gently led me back into the narrow way.

So Father I put my trust in you. You who will keep me till the river rolls its waters at my feet and you bear me safely over; And yes, I will sing again the wondrous story of the Christ who died for me, I will sing it with your saints in glory, Gathered by the crystal sea.

Yes, I will sing the wondrous story Christ who died for me. AMEN

The Lord's Prayer:

So we bring our prayers together as we pray together using the words that Jesus taught us.

Our Father, who art in heaven ...

Today's Gospel Reading: John 10:1-10

The parable of the 'Good Shepherd'.

(read by Jennifer Ellenger: St Ouen)

Time to Reflect *(Revd Debbie Poole)*

Based on John 10 verses 1 – 10

The parable of the Good Shepherd.

I wonder what it is you miss? Apart from the obvious contact with family and socialising with friends, and especially cuddles with the grandchildren! I miss not being able to go out when I want. I even miss shopping in the Supermarket! On an island surrounded by beautiful beaches, I miss going for a walk on the shore. Being high risk, Derek and I are only allowed to go for a short walk in the lanes around our house. So, there are lots of things I miss and will be looking forward to being able to do again once this is over.

But there are other things that I have discovered I missed before and have now found again. The stillness and quiet. Backing on to a busy housing estate, usually, we hear lots of cars, the general noise of children, young people and families as they come and go.

But now, we can hear the birdsong all day. When we do go out for a walk or onto the front porch, neighbours say hello and sometimes stop and chat, at a safe distance of course. One of the things that moves me emotionally is going outside every Thursday and joining with others to clap, bang saucepans or, in my husband's case, ring a hand-bell, in solidarity with the whole community to give thanks for those who are working on the front line to keep us safe. Being less busy has certainly enabled me to appreciate the simple and beautiful things in life and, making that re-connection with nature, lifts my spirit.

I love watching the creative or innovative ways that people are sharing online, or on the news as they seek to raise still money for charities who are struggling to raise the funds they desperately need. The amazing Captain Tom Moore who, at almost 100, has raised more than £28 million for the NHS.

The funny things which make me laugh, and the beautiful reflections, music and pictures that often move me to tears. The sense of community and togetherness, which we seemed to have lost is re-emerging. Many of our priorities have changed.

I have also discovered God in new ways. In this parable, Jesus is using a familiar picture of the Shepherd caring for his sheep. In the Middle East, Shepherds would lead their flocks which would follow them. They would often sleep at the entrance of the sheepfold to keep them safe, and they knew each one by name. Life was tough for many who heard Jesus words, and his reassurance that God's love was with them made a big difference.

During this pandemic experience, our images are different. But God remains the same. He goes before us and leads us through uncertain times. In all the numbers that are quoted daily, we are reminded that God knows us each by name. We hear his voice in those who deliver shopping, post, or prescriptions. In phone calls, messages and in Rainbows that tell us of love and hope. In words whispered by the doctors, nurses and all those who care.

And even in the stillness and quiet, God's voice gently caresses us in the breeze, sun, rain and silence. In the birdsong and blossom.

As the phrase reminds us: we may be apart from those we love but never alone. Even when the thief of Covid-19 comes, God is present. Just before John Wesley died, his last words were: 'And best of all, God is with us'. As Christians, we believe that death is not the end, but life in all its fullness is perfected.

So, what is it that you miss? And what is it that you have found in this experience? Both will shape our lives for the future. But maybe more importantly, where have you found God? and where has God found you?

However, you are feeling today, God understands, whatever situation you are in God is there. Remember, even Jesus cried out: 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?' Yet, God's promise is true, and Jesus reassures us that God will never leave us. He is with us always.

In the past, when I have walked on the beach, I have always felt especially close to God, and I am reminded of the poem Footprints, which I share with you:

Footprints Poem:

One night I had a dream. I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky, flashed scenes from my life. For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand. One belonging to me and one belonging to the Lord.

When the last scene of my life flashed before me, I looked back at the footprints in the sand. I noticed that many times along the path of my life, there was only one set of footprints. I also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times of my life.

This really bothered me, and I questioned the Lord about it. Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me.

The Lord replied, my precious, precious child, I love you, and I would never leave you! During your times of trial and suffering when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.

*Adapted by Carolyn Carty, 1963
from an original by Mary Stephenson, 1936.*

*May you find God in your day and hold on to him.
And when you cannot find God, let Him hold on to you!*

Amen.



*Footprints in the Sand © Rebecca Brogan
JTBarts.com*

Hymn: The Lord's my Shepherd: Townend (StF 481)
Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN4tPkX0MGO>

- 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.

*Stuart Townend © 1996 Thankyou Music
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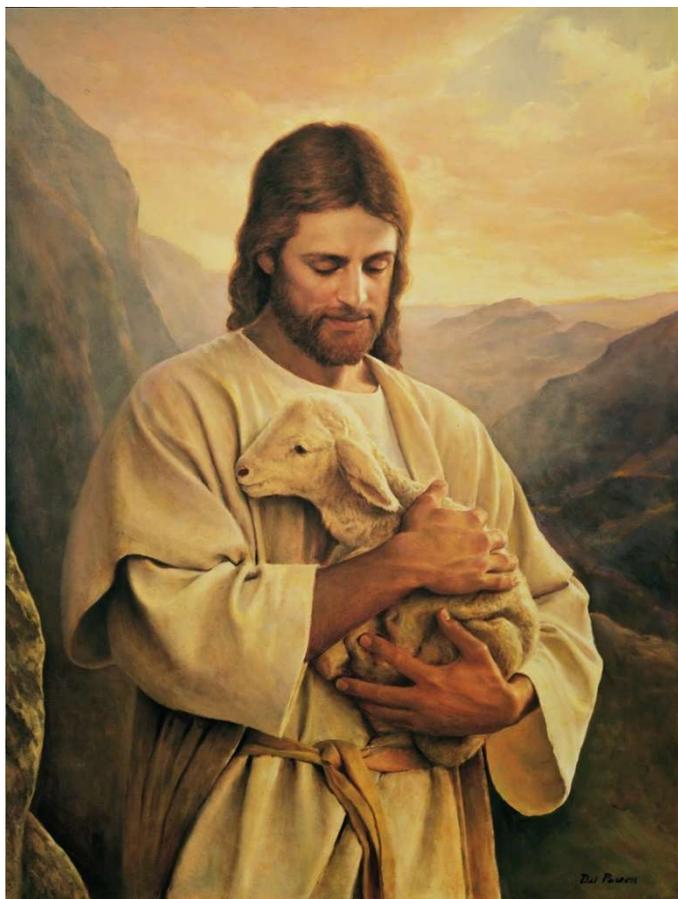
A time of prayer:

Let us pray for our world in crisis, a crisis that has brought out the best and the worst in humanity:

We give thanks for those who are offering help in so many ways to those in need; and pray for those who in their fear, acted less generously.

We give thanks for all the 'key workers' who have worked tirelessly in the medical and care sectors; Local Authority and community teams; production and distribution; And pray for those now idle, anxious and depressed due to the closures. We give thanks for positive voices, encouraging and nurturing others in so many ways; and pray for those whose voices bring 'fake' advice and false testimony.

Good Shepherd of the sheep,
by whom the lost are sought and guided into the fold:
feed us, and we shall be satisfied;
heal us, and we shall be made whole, and lead us,
that we may be with you; for you are alive and reign,
with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**



'The Good Shepherd'
Original unknown

Hymn: Father I place into your hands (StF 519)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBfRNrvvUfc>

- 1) Father, I place into your hands
The things that I can't do.
Father, I place into Your hands
The times that I've been through.
Father, I place into Your hands
The way that I should go,
For I know, I always can trust You.
- 2) Father, I place into Your hands
My friends and family.
Father, I place into Your hands
The things that trouble me.
Father, I place into Your hands
The person I would be,
For I know, I always can trust You.
- 3) Father, we love to see Your face,
We love to hear Your voice.
Father, we love to sing Your praise
And in Your name, rejoice.
Father, we love to walk with You
And in Your presence rest,
For we know, we always can trust You.
- 4) Father, I want to be with You
And do the things You do.
Father, I want to speak the words
That You are speaking too.
Father, I want to love the ones
That You will draw to You,
For I know, that I am one with You.

Jenny Hewer (born 1945)

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A prayer of blessing

I come into your sheep-fold this day, to find the rest I need. When the new day comes, I will follow you through green pastures and beside still waters. May your goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life. May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you, your loved ones, and those you are called to love, now and always. Amen.