

Welcome and Notices

Praise: Living waters (Getty)

Are you thirsty
Are you empty
Come and drink these Living Waters
Time unbroken
Peace unspoken
Rest beside these Living Waters
Christ is calling
Find refreshing
At the cross of Living Waters
Lay your life down
On Thee, all come
Rise up in these Living Waters
There's a river that flows
With mercy and love
Bringing joy to the city of our God
There our hope is secure
Do not fear anymore
Praise the Lord of Living Waters
Spirit moving
Mercy washing
Healing in these living waters
Lead your children to the shore line
Life is in these Living Waters
There's a river that flows
With mercy and love
Bringing joy to the city of our God
There our hope is secure
Do not fear anymore
Praise the Lord of Living Waters
Are you thirsty
Are you empty
Come and drink these Living Waters
Love, forgiveness
Vast and boundless
Christ, He is our Living Water

Find the sheep video

Praise: As the sun rises (Sameboat music)

Prayer:

Jesus, the Good Shepherd,
day by day you welcome us and help us to worship.
Day by day you feed us and help us to grow.
Day by day you bring us together and encourage us to share.
Day by day we are full of awe for the wonderful things you do.
Day by day we praise you, the Good Shepherd,
for your goodness and care.

Good Shepherd,
Teach us to follow you
to care for all that are close to us,

to protect those who are threatened,
to welcome those who are rejected,
to forgive those who are burdened by guilt,
to heal those who are broken and sick,
to share with those who have little or nothing,
to take the time to really know one another
and love as you have loved us.

Reading: John 10:1 - 10

Jesus said, "I am telling you the truth: the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber. ² The man who goes in through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him; the sheep hear his voice as he calls his own sheep by name, and he leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought them out, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice. ⁵ They will not follow someone else; instead, they will run away from such a person, because they do not know his voice."

⁶ Jesus told them this parable, but they did not understand what he meant.

Jesus the Good Shepherd

⁷ So Jesus said again, "I am telling you the truth: I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All others who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the gate. Those who come in by me will be saved; they will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness.

Sermon: The Good shepherd

Sheep played a very important part in the lives of many individuals in both testaments in scripture. How often were the people compared to sheep that had gone astray as they had turned their backs on God yet again. God was often referred to as the Good Shepherd who continued to care for his flock no matter how often they wandered off.

Of the most well-known passages is Psalm 23, which Tony reflected on his devotion earlier last week. This psalm tells us just how much the great Shepherd cares for his sheep, how he guides them beside still waters and leads them to quiet pastures. And then in this passage of scripture this morning we find Jesus comparing himself to the shepherd of the flock.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." That is what makes him good, according to John—his willingness to get involved, to risk his life for the life of his flock. His flock. Not somebody else's flock, which he may get paid for looking after, but his own flock—the one he has bought and bred, cared for and protected.

He is fully invested here, in more ways than one. Not only are his sheep his livelihood, they are more like his extended family. They know his voice, his touch, his smell, his walk. If they are grazing with a thousand other sheep and he called them, they would separate themselves from the crowd and follow him home. His whistle was the sound of safety for them—the sound of still waters and green pastures.

He also knows them by name and character. There is something about ownership that creates a level of intimacy, especially ownership of living things. Dog and cat lovers will tell you that their pets get to know their moods. For example, when they are feeling down, cat owners will say that their cat suddenly appears and hops onto their lap. And when things are a bit frenetic and all action around the house, they go off to do their own thing. Pets become just like us – apparently, they even begin to look like us! There has also been a suggestion that when there is a pet in the family sometimes it is not easy to tell who owns whom.

But there's also another aspect to ownership. You may have heard people talk about "owning their feelings" or "owning up to" a problem. When I hear expressions like that, and when I put them together with the story of the good shepherd who owns the sheep, I begin to think of ownership as a certain kind of relationship, one that is created between people and other people, or animals, or things.

When viewed like this, ownership is not about mere possession, but about being bound to something beyond ourselves, about identifying with it so strongly that it becomes part of us. When it is threatened, we defend it as if we were defending our own bodies, and sometimes that can get us into trouble.

I think we can all identify with some of the rough and tumbles we may have ended up confronting in the school playground. Where someone took offence at something that was said or done, and the threat was made to knock your block off! However, if you were lucky, you may have had a friend who was probably a little bigger and stronger than you, who stood beside you, and uttered those most comforting of phrases: "When you're talking to him, you're talking to me."

There is intimate relationship in this scenario - the willingness to risk one's own safety in order to defend someone else's. Why - because there is a close connection with your protector, and it's important.

Generally, we are warned away from getting involved in other people's problems. Parents teach us to mind our own business and let other people mind theirs.

But sometimes I think we all deserve to have someone in our lives who will say, "When you're talking to him, you're talking to me," someone who will go that extra mile to help you, to defend you, to support you.

This is agape, self-giving love, the kind of love the good shepherd practices and the kind he teaches. If the shepherd had been a hired hand, we would not even know his name. A hired hand would have taken one look at the opposition and vanished. If he had been a religious hired hand, he might have said, "God bless you! I'll pray for you!" before he disappeared, but he would not have come to the rescue.

Because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. He does not own them, involving himself so deeply in their lives that he risks his own to protect theirs. He minds his own business. He takes care of himself.

The good shepherd, on the other hand, lays down his life for the sheep. But then what happens to the sheep, you are wondering—who protects them after he is dead?

You may know this story. We tell it quite a lot at this time of the year. We tell it every time we gather around this table. On the night before he died, the sheep all fell asleep after a special meal, with the sound of the shepherd's whistle in their ears. And as they slept, they shared a terrible dream: of wolves with clubs and torches who came out of the woods, led their shepherd away, and tore him to shreds on a hillside outside of town.

In the dream, they huddled for safety, unable to think, unable to move, and they stayed that way for three whole days, wondering if they would starve to death before the wolves came back to finish the job.

But then on the third day, they heard a whistle—far away at first, then drawing nearer—that woke them from their sleep, and they stood once again in the presence of their good shepherd. Everything was the same again, but everything had changed.

Looking around at each other, they saw what had happened. They had fallen asleep as sheep, but they had woken up as shepherds. As they slept, every one of them had been changed into the image of their master, and as they stood there staring at one another he handed them crooks like his, and whistles, and sent them out to gather their own flocks. “Do for them as I did for you,” he said.

And that’s what we’ve been trying to do since then. Of course, we don’t always get it right – this self-sacrifice thing is quite hard. But our Lord is patient and gracious, he is our Shepherd. He will always be there to support, love and encourage us on our way!

Offering Prayer

Prayers of Intercession

Good Shepherd,
Teach us to follow you
to care for all that are close to us,
to protect those who are threatened,
to welcome those who are rejected,
to forgive those who are burdened by guilt,
to heal those who are broken and sick,
to share with those who have little or nothing,
to take the time to really know one another
and love as you have loved us.

Good Shepherd,
Teach us to follow you
to spread compassion to those who are far away,
to speak for those who are voiceless,
to defend those who are oppressed and abused,
to work for justice for those who are exploited,
to make peace for those who suffer violence,
to take the time to recognise our connectedness,
and to love as you have loved us.

Good Shepherd,
Teach us to follow you
and to be faithful to calling you gave us
to be shepherds in your name.

Praise: Vagabonds (Townend)

Come, all you vagabonds,
Come all you ‘don’t belongs’
Winners and losers,
Come, people like me.
Come all you travellers
Tired from the journey,
Come wait a while, stay a while,
Welcomed you’ll be.

Come all you questioners
Looking for answers,

And searching for reasons
And sense in it all;
Come all you fallen,
And come all you broken,
Find strength for your body
And food for your soul.

Come to the feast,
There is room at the table.
Come let us meet in this place.
With the King of all kindness
Who welcomes us in,
With the wonder of love,
And the power of grace.
The wonder of the love,
And the power of grace.

Come those who worry
'Bout houses and money,
And all those who don't have
A care in the world;
From every station
And orientation,
The helpless, the hopeless,
The young and the old.

Come all believers
And dreamers and schemers,
And come all you restless
Just searching for home;
Movers and shakers
And givers and takers,
The happy, the sad
And the lost and alone.

Come self-sufficient
With wearied ambition,
And come those who feel
At the end of the road.
Fiery debaters
And religion haters,
Accusers, abusers,
The hurt and ignored.

Communion

Great Shepherd of the world, you are indeed holy, and great is the majesty of your glory. You created all things and showered blessings and loving care upon all that you created. You formed Israel as your chosen flock, and made them to lie down in green pasture. And when they turned from you, you did not spurn them, but sent forth another shepherd, your only Son, to seek out the lost sheep of Israel and of all the world and call them to himself by name.

On the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Father God, with this bread and cup, we remember the life of Christ our shepherd and the covenant he made with us. We remember his seeking of the lost, the outcast, the sinner, and we remember his loving example as a shepherd among us. But especially we remember his own willingness to lay down his shepherd's staff and become the Lamb who died on the cross for our sins. As you raised him from death to life, so send him again in our days to raise us up and gather us as his flock around your eternal throne.

Send now, we pray, your Holy Spirit, that this bread and this cup might be the body and blood of our shepherd Christ, that we might be renewed in spirit and find our fellowship among the saved.

Prayer: With loving hand and guiding staff, keep us all on the path to righteousness until we are joined as one heavenly flock with the saints and angels of glory, where we will sing eternal praises in the presence of Christ our good shepherd. Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. Amen

Fraction:

O Christ, our Good Shepherd, be among us this day in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup.

After Communion:

Let us pray. O God, we thank you that you have fed us with the gift of your Son, the Good Shepherd, Jesus our Saviour. May his body and blood strengthen and unite us as one flock under one shepherd as he guides us all our days, even to the gates of heaven; through the same Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen

Benediction

Thank you for abundant life;
Thank you for your generous love
Help me to love generously that others
May experience the abundance of your life.

Praise: The Lord's my shepherd (Townend)

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

Chorus 1

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

Verse 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

(Repeat Chorus)

Verse 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

(Repeat Chorus)