



Fourth Sunday of Easter

7 May 2017

Sentence 'I am the good shepherd,' says the Lord. 'The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep'. *John 10.11*

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 its fullness.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, the resurrection and the life,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

This is a description of life in the first Christian community. They shared ordinary meals as well as the Lord's Supper (which we now generally call by its Greek name of Eucharist meaning thanksgiving), shared their material resources for the common good and imitated Jesus in 'signs and wonders'. Being Jews, they also worshipped in the Temple as well as in house churches.

Many were baptised and were added to the community. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple,

they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.
Acts 2.42.47

Reader Hear the word of the Lord
ALL Thanks be to God

Psalm 23 APBA page 243

God is portrayed as shepherd-king and host in this most loved of psalms. It is a song of trust in the divine shepherd who leads his people through danger to security, and prepares a generous table in the midst of want. To dwell in the house of the Lord forever means, not the Temple (people did not dwell there) but the land of promise, the land of Israel.

A reading from the first letter of Peter

Continuing the baptismal instruction, Peter says that after new birth comes spiritual nourishment and nurture that leads to maturity. The images of the Christian life, which are communal rather than individualistic, from birth and growth to the construction of a spiritual house (temple) and holy priesthood (community). Thus, language once only applied to Israel is now used of Gentile converts to Christian faith as we also inherit the promises of God.

Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture:

'See, I am laying in Zion a stone,

a cornerstone chosen and precious;
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'
To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe,
'The stone that the builders rejected
has become the very head of the corner',
and
'A stone that makes them stumble,
and a rock that makes them fall.'
They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to
do.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own
people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called
you out of darkness into his marvellous light.
Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people;
once you had not received mercy,
but now you have received mercy.

1 Peter 2.1-10

Reader May your word live in us
ALL and bear much fruit to your glory.

Gospel Acclamation

ALL Alleluia! Alleluia!

I am the good shepherd, says the Lord;

I know my sheep and mine know me.

ALL Alleluia!

Reader The Lord be with you

ALL And also with you

Reader A reading from the holy gospel according to John

ALL Glory to you Lord Jesus Christ

Jesus speaks of himself as the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep rather than allowing them to be at the mercy of thieves and bandits who would steal and harm. Jesus is drawing on well known imagery from the prophets and the psalms but giving a new meaning with the emphatic, 'I am the gate' which refers to Ps 118.20 and the entrance rituals of the Temple. The Pharisees to whom these words were spoken would have been in no doubt that Jesus considered them to be no better than 'hired hands.'

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.

John 10.1-10

Reader For the Gospel of the Lord
ALL Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Prayer for the Week

God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant: make us perfect in every good work to do your will, and work in us that which is well-pleasing in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Bible Readings next week

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Acts 7.55-60 Psalm 31.1-5,17-18 1 Peter 2.11-25 John 14.1-14

Pray for the Faithful Departed

We remember before God: Phyllis Ramsden, Myra Lesley Douglas, Peggy Shannon, Edgar Chandler and June Manders, *whose anniversaries occur this week.*

Commemorations of the Week.

May 8 Julian of Norwich, holy woman and mystic (c.1342-1417). Julian was an English mystic, who received sixteen visions on 8 May 1373, recorded in the first book ever written in the 'new' language of English, *Revelations of Divine Love*. Theological books were normally written in Latin as it was the language of scholarship. Julian suffered a life threatening illness during which she was granted visions; she subsequently reflected on these and twice wrote, in shorter and longer form, her insights into the mysteries of faith, prayer and most especially the unconditional love of God for all people. She became an anchorite, living in two small rooms attached to St Julian's Church in Norwich and offering spiritual counsel to those who sought her out. Her 'cell' has been reconstructed beside the parish church and is visited today by people from around the world.

See < <http://juliancentre.org>> Some quotes from her writings: Pray, even if you feel nothing, see nothing. For when you are dry, empty, sick or weak, at such a time is your prayer most pleasing to God, even though you may find little joy in it. This is true of all believing prayer.

He [Jesus] did not say, 'You will never have a rough passage, you will never be over-strained, you will never feel uncomfortable,' but he did say, 'You will never be overcome.'

All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well.

