

Dorset South and West Methodist Circuit Written Service
25th April 2021 – prepared by Student Deacon Janet Amey

CALL TO WORSHIP

Today, O God, let us know your power to make us strong, your counsel to make us wise, your grace to make us holy and your glory to bring us into your presence. Amen.

Martin Luther (1483 - 1546)

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil; for you are with me;
your rod and your staff— they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

Hymn: I will sing the wondrous story

I will sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me;
How He left the realms of glory
For the cross of Calvary.
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.

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.
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.

He will keep me till the river
Rolls its waters at my feet;
Then at last He'll bring me over
Saved by grace and mystery
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.

PRAYERS

Glorious God,

As the spring awakens from the sleep of winter, we see your presence in the world

As the sun shines bright colourful stripes across the sky both morning and evening,
we know your presence is with us.

Glorious God, we join with creation to worship you and give thanks for your presence in our lives.

For your wisdom, your love, the freedom of life and generous grace, we praise you.

Accept our hymns, our prayers, our worship and our love,

As we invite you into our hearts,

Amen

We bring our prayers of confession before God.

I invite you to take a moment to bring to mind the times, words and moments that burden your heart.

Faithful God,

We are called to be a people of love.

We bring before you the times when we have not acted in love.

The times that we have not cared for one another.

The words we have spoken that have caused harm.

The actions that we have chosen that have caused pain.

Refresh us, and renew us in your cleansing love, and forgive us.

In God we are assured of forgiveness and love.

Thanks be to God,

Amen

READING, John 10:11-18

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own 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 do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

REFLECTION

This is a reading that is quite well known and well quoted. Jesus as the good shepherd, and his followers are his flock. The hired hand and the wolf are not seen as good things, and the shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. There are themes of crucifixion, resurrection, hope, temptation, love and faithfulness here for us to ponder on. Our vulnerability has been highlighted in this last year, being a sheep with a shepherd is an easier picture to see ourselves in! I offer you two different perspectives that I hope are of some value to you.

Firstly, I ask you to read the reading again, taking note of all the different characters. As we discern our lives following the good shepherd, this reading offers us an opportunity to hold up a mirror, and see what looks back! Are there times when you have been a good shepherd to others, guiding, protecting, enabling growth and helping those around you to live and thrive? Are there times when you have been a sheep in the flock? Or a lone sheep in the wilderness? How has the good shepherd found you, protected you, or do you still feel lost? Are there times when you have been the hired help, out of your depth, unwilling to ask for help and giving wrong directions? Are there times when you have been the wolf, jealous of the protected sheep, or angry and blinded by rage? Pull the reading close to your own life and feelings, what do you discover?

The second offering is a story I heard. A sheepdog was given up because it became totally deaf so was useless to the farmer. I am not certain of the details of how the dog became deaf, but it was 8 years old. So handed in at a dog rescue shelter at 8 years old and deaf, the dog who had loved being a working dog, was now alone, sad and defeated. A worker at the shelter felt sorry for the dog and took it home, this worker actually lived on a sheep farm. After months of retraining, the dog was taught sign and body language. This meant it could continue to help out as a sheep dog, alongside 2 other dogs, happily working on the sheep farm. The shepherd, working part-time in a dog rescue, saw the potential in the dog, and supported it as it began its new life, with a shepherd that loved it and was never going to give it up!

Journeying through life, comes with good times and some difficult times. Many people are suffering financially, suffering with poor mental health, suffering with housing problems and generally going through difficult times. People are looking for meaning to life. To know that *good shepherd* is to live freely and to be the best of who you can be. Our calling is to be a presence in the communities in which we live. Knowing the good shepherd gives sight and perspective into the world around us; an awareness of God's presence in all things, and in all places. What is the message, the help, that we can give to those that find themselves left sad and defeated? What changes can you make in your life to respond to the good shepherd?

Jesus says 'I am the good shepherd' – this is an invitation to deepen your discipleship with Jesus, but also a challenge to who you are and how you live.

Hymn: There is a higher Throne

There is a higher throne, than all this world has known,
Where faithful ones from every tongue will one day come.
Before the Son we'll stand, made faultless through the Lamb;
Believing hearts find promised grace—
Salvation comes.

*Hear heaven's voices sing;
Their thunderous anthem rings
Through emerald courts and sapphire skies. Their praises rise.
All glory, wisdom, power, strength, thanks, and honour are
To God our King, who reigns on high, forevermore.*

And there we'll find our home, our life before the throne;
We'll honour Him in perfect song where we belong.
He'll wipe each tear-stained eye. As thirst and hunger die.
The Lamb becomes our Shepherd King;
We'll reign with Him.

*Hear heaven's voices sing;
Their thunderous anthem rings
Through emerald courts and sapphire skies. Their praises rise.
All glory, wisdom, power, strength, thanks, and honour are
To God our King, who reigns on high, forevermore.*

Prayers for the world

Below are some sentences, you are invited to pause after each one and add your own thoughts and prayers, before continuing.

We pray for the situations and places that are on our hearts.
For the lost, for the hurt, for the bereaved,
For the sick, for the hungry, for the broken,
For those facing difficult decisions,
For those facing difficult challenges,
For the coming weeks, as we adjust to new ways of being,
May God's love surround us, and those that we pray for and bring comfort and peace.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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: Be thou my vision

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that thou art -
Thou my best thought, by day or by night;
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord.
Thou my great Father; thine own may I be,
Thou in me dwelling and I one with thee.

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise;
Thou mine inheritance, now and always;
Thou and thou only first in my heart,
High King of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, my victory won,
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

BLESSING: May we live with faith, love and peace in our hearts, as we go in God's presence.
May the blessing of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us
today and always. Amen