

Kirkby Stephen, Appleby and Tebay Methodist Circuit
Service for Sunday 3rd May 2020

Welcome to our Sunday worship service for the third week of Easter. Today we are looking at John Chapter 10 v 1-11. Jesus says I AM the Good Shepherd. In these times of life where everything seems uncertain, Jesus, in responding to the Pharisees, makes one of the seven I AM statements. Jesus uses imagery, familiar to us here in this area, that He is the Good Shepherd and also the only Gate through which the sheep (we) may pass into the fold (eternal life).

Call to Worship - "I have come that they may have life and have it in abundance" John Ch. 10 v 10.

Prayer – Lord Jesus Christ, draw our hearts to Yours with a love that is irresistible; unite our hearts to Yours with a love that is immeasurable; and bind our hearts to Yours with a love that is inseparable; now and for ever. **Amen**

Hymn – MP 560– Praise My soul - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuLmDye_5ys

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven, to His feet thy tribute bring;
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, who like thee His praise should sing?
Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise the everlasting King.

Praise Him for His grace and favour to our fathers in distress;
Praise Him, still the same for ever, slow to chide and swift to bless;
Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him! Glorious in His faithfulness.

Father-like, He tends and spares us, well our feeble frame He knows;
In His hands He gently bears us, rescues us from all our foes:
Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him! Widely as His mercy flows.

Angels, help us to adore Him; ye behold Him face to face;
Sun and moon, bow down before Him, dwellers all in time and space.
Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise with us the God of grace.

Prayer of Adoration

Glory to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Glory to God the Father, whose goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life.

Glory to God the Son, the Good Shepherd, who knows His sheep by name,
and laid down His life for them.

Glory to God the Spirit, who guides us in the way of Christ and gathers us into His Church.

Glory to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Prayer of Confession

Generous God, You offer us abundant life, yet we ask for more;

You offer us security and sanctuary, yet we seek our own way – despite the risks;

You offer us guidance and direction, and we ignore You and take our own way.

We are sorry for our ingratitude. We are sorry for our arrogance.

We are sorry that we think we know best.

Forgive us. *Hear the words of Jesus, 'Your sins are forgiven in My Name. Go and sin no more'*

Gracious God, renew us and restore us to abundant life in You, in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Introduction

Jesus says, 'I AM the Good Shepherd' – a picture that was familiar to the people of His day – and also to us, here in Cumbria! Shepherding was a staple of the economy in Israel in Jesus' days – as it is here in Cumbria too.

Jesus' challenge in John 10 is to the Pharisees (and us) – are they good shepherds? Jesus' imagery has a resonance with the prophet Ezekiel (Ch 34), which speaks to the false shepherds and their 'abuse' of their flock. God says, 'I will send "My Shepherd"' (v23) – a reference to Jesus Himself.

Take a little time to reflect on the role of a good shepherd and a watchman, who guard the gate to the overnight sheep-fold – praying for those in leadership positions that they may be a symbol of Jesus guarding and guiding His church and give thanks to Him.

(You may also like to note the OT references to shepherds: Psalm 23; Psalm 80v1; Isaiah 40v11; Jeremiah 23v1-4; Ezekiel 34; Zechariah 11 and the many references to 'shepherds' in the gospels.)

Reading – John Ch 10 v 1-11.

'Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen 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 recognize 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 (in abundance). I AM the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.'

Hymn – MP 649 – The King of love– https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcCwUF0s_-Y

The King of love my shepherd is, whose goodness faileth never.

I nothing lack if I am His, and He is mine forever.

Where streams of living water flow, my ransomed soul He leadeth;
and where the verdant pastures grow, with food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish, oft I strayed, but yet in love He sought me;
and on His shoulder gently laid, and home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill, with Thee, dear Lord, beside me;
Thy rod and staff my comfort still, Thy cross before to guide me.

Thou spreadst a table in my sight; Thy unction grace bestoweth;
and oh, what transport of delight from Thy pure chalice floweth!

And so through all the length of days, Thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise within Thy house forever.

Reflection part 1

Text – I Peter 2v24-25. "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Whose voice do you like to listen to? I used to enjoy listening to Terry Wogan in the morning on my way to work – a wonderful lilting voice! Or perhaps for sports fans – John Arnott, the cricket commentator on the BBC – famous for his 30 minute description of putting on the covers at Lords (a master-piece!)

Perhaps there are voices that are easy to listen to – and, maybe, other voices we tune out. Heather sometimes says, 'Earth calling Stephen!' to get my attention! Perhaps I have selective hearing – I'm not sure! Jesus said, 'My sheep listen to My voice, I know them and they follow to Me' – John 10v27

Jesus contrasts Himself with the false shepherds in 5 particular ways:

1. **The appointment Jesus receives.** Jesus has been appointed by God the Father for His task – He is not self-appointed like some leaders. We are told that Christ Jesus is the 'Head' of the church – appointed (and anointed) by God. In John 15v16b, Jesus says to us, 'I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last'. Jesus has chosen you (and me) for a purpose. He has appointed us and, when Jesus does that, He also anoints us and equips us for the role. *Reflect on the 'appointment' Jesus has given you.*
2. **The response Jesus evokes.** I spoke about voices you like to listen to – but, here, in John 10, it is more than just listening. 'My sheep hear my voice and follow me', says Jesus (John 10v27). Instantly, crowds followed Jesus – His teachings brought them closer to God. It is true that many refused to listen, but Mark 12v37 tells us that the common people heard Him gladly! How well do we listen for the Shepherd's voice? There are many ways to listen – reading Scripture (daily); Godly counsel from friends and leaders; through creation; a sense of peace when discerning God's direction; through prayer. We need to listen (as well as talk) – **and obey**. But our hearing can also be impaired. How? – by not setting aside time for God; unconfessed sins of pride, bitterness, resentment, or fear. We are responsible to be alert, like His flock, always listening for His voice. One farmer told me of a flock of sheep, on a hillside beside a road. As traffic went by, the sheep never moved – but as soon as they heard the farmer's Landrover chugging up the hill, they all ran to the gate (food!) – responding to the shepherd's call!

3. **The call Jesus issues.** It's still common in the Middle East to give sheep names – reflecting a particular characteristic! Jesus says, 'I have called you by name!' This is so reassuring in these days of statistics and percentages – we are not a number or a group – Jesus calls and knows you by name! He knows each and every one of us and we are individually loved by God. Take time and listen to God calling your name – Jesus has a message just for you!
4. **The directions Jesus provides.** John 10v3 says, 'The shepherd ... leads them [the sheep] out'. Jesus is our guide in life and we are to follow His direction. John 8v12 says that following Jesus is to 'never walk in the darkness, but ... have the light of life'. What a promise! The Pharisees saw themselves as people's guides, with their laws and regulations – they had rules to cover everything! But Jesus teaches here that living the life of faith means following the Master and having a living relationship with our Living Lord. It is personal!
5. **The obedience Jesus elicits.** 'My sheep follow my voice' (John 10v4). Jesus is recognized by His own who gladly allow Him to lead them! It is a call to obedience and trust in the Good Shepherd!

Reflect on the words of the Iona hymn, 'Will you come and follow me'

*Will You Come And Follow Me, if I But Call Your Name?
Will You Go Where You Don't Know and Never Be The Same?
Will You Let My Love Be Shown, Will You Let My Name Be Known,
Will You Let My Life Be Grown In You And You In Me?*

Our response to Jesus' challenge is not a matter of 'trying harder' but one of trust – as our next hymn reminds us.

Hymn –MP 1008 – The Lord's my Shepherd – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-elQQayhpak>

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.*

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.

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.

*'You must make your choices one at a time since each is contingent upon the decision that precedes it. Instead of trying to create a mental map of your path through the day, focus on My loving Presence with you. I will equip you as you go, so that you can handle whatever comes your way. **Trust me to supply what you need, when you need it.**' (from 'Jesus Calling' by Sarah Young – April 28th)*

Prayers of Intercession

God of love, let Your love fill our lives – especially in these difficult times;

may our hearts be filled with Your joy; may we know your forgiveness and freedom from fear;

may Your love guide all our thoughts and actions in these days

as Your love reaches out to all.

God of love, let Your love fill the church – in these days of separation and isolation;

may we know Your Spirit binding us together, inspiring our worship and service;

give us courage and vision to reach out to all.

God of love, let Your love fill our land – at this time of concern, illness and fear;

may all show respect to each individual, caring for those in need and protecting the vulnerable;

may we be a people who reach out to all.

God of love, let Your love fill our world – a world in desperate need in so many ways;

may Your love bring healing, justice, an equal sharing of resources and Your peace;

may we play our part in reaching out to all with Your love.

Final thought

John 10v10 says, 'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full' ie 'in abundance'!

Jesus offers us abundant life – a life so full of life that there is some to spare to share with others.

What area of your life do you want Jesus to bless with His abundance, so that you can share the blessing with others?

Hymn –MP22 All the way my Saviour leads me https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jueLO_6P1ek

All the way my Saviour leads me; what have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt His tender mercy, who through life has been my guide?
Heavenly peace, divinest comfort here by faith in Him to dwell
For I know whate'er fall me Jesus doeth all things well.

All of the way my Saviour leads me, cheers each winding path I tread
Gives me strength for every trial, feeds me with the living bread
And though my weary steps may falter and my soul a-thirst may be
Gushing from a rock before me, Lo! a spring of joy I see
And all the way my Saviour leads me, O the fullness of His love
Perfect rest in me is promised in my Father's house above
When my spirit, clothed, immortal, wings its flight to realms of the day
This my song through endless ages; Jesus led me all the way!

Jesus truly does lead us all the way! Read this Psalm of praise to God.

Psalm 150.

*Praise God in His sanctuary;praise Him in His mighty heavens.
Praise Him for His acts of power;praise Him for His surpassing greatness.
Praise Him with the sounding of the trumpet,praise Him with the harp and lyre.
Praise Him with timbrel and dancing, praise Him with the strings and pipe.
Praise Him with the clash of cymbals, praise Him with resounding cymbals.
Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.Praise the LORD.*

Prayer

Go out into the world. Go where God leads you. Go that you may serve Him.
And wherever you go, know that God is with you. **Amen**

Grace

Additional reflection: 'I met the good shepherd' (MHB 174) - https://hymnary.org/tune/st_wilfred_floyd

I met the Good Shepherd, just now on the plain, as homeward He carried His lost one again;
I marvelled how gently His burden He bore; and as He passed by me, I knelt to adore.

O Shepherd, Good Shepherd, Thy wounds they are deep; the wolves have sore hurt Thee in saving
Thy sheep.

Thy raiment all over with crimson is dyed; and what is this wound they have made in Thy side?

Ah me! How Thy thorns have entangled Thy hair, and cruelly riven that forehead so fair;
How feebly Thou drawest Thy faltering breath; and lo, on Thy face is the shadow of death.

O Shepherd, Good Shepherd, and is it for me, this grievous affliction has fallen on Thee?
Ah, then let me strive for the love Thou hast borne, to give Thee no longer occasion to mourn.

