

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 17

Sunday 3rd May 2020

‘Virtually Church but with some way to go...’

Welcome

This Sunday we focus on the theme of the Good Shepherd as reflected in both Psalm 23 and Jesus’ description of His ministry. Ron reflects on this below.

Also this Sunday we have the first of our suggested hymns which you can look up on Youtube to accompany the readings, reflections and prayers.

I am also reminded that Premier Radio have a programme each Sunday from 8.00am to 10.00am presented by Pam Rhodes called ‘Hearts and Hymns’. Pam presents a great variety of hymns each week and shares about the author and why they were written. This together with other material connected with Premier Radio is included in our Resources section.

Scripture Passage

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.

John 10: 1-18

“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.

“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

Before there was the Cross, there was the Good Shepherd. The earliest Christians used the image of a shepherd, with a sheep on his shoulders, in frescoes and mosaics, engraved on plates and modelled on pottery lamps. It might not have looked like Jesus, but it conveyed the *idea* of Jesus the Good Shepherd. But soon, the cross as the symbol of Jesus' suffering and death came along, and the Good Shepherd was sidelined. Was that for the best?

The Jews always believed their Messiah, the one who would come and raise them up to be God's true chosen people, would be a descendant of David. David is one of the most important figures in the Old Testament. And David, before he was a soldier, or an outlaw, or a king, was a shepherd. And he never forgot it. The old man* who wrote psalm 23 was remembering what it was like to be a shepherd boy - not trusting in his own big stick, but in God. So Jesus embraced the image of shepherd, and took it to himself.

When Jesus met Peter after the Resurrection, he asked him three times, "Do you love me?" because three times Peter had denied he even knew him. And each time he replied, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you", Jesus gave him the commission, "Feed my sheep". So Peter became the shepherd, the leader of the church. Jesus picks up on David's psalm, saying *I am the good shepherd*. God's role is to be shepherd of his people, by leading us to where we can find spiritual nourishment.

Green pastures and still waters are on the menu. Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice, I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish." When we're with Jesus, we come to know his voice. We come to know him as a friend, and be close to him in prayer. When you're out taking your allotted stint of exercise, maybe with the dog, or you're in the car, just let your thoughts turn to God. Just mentally make contact. You don't have to say anything but hello, but the act of remembering that God is with you, is prayer. And if you practice that, I promise, you will be closer to

Jesus. The Christian life feeds us with the guidance of God, and his promises. And once you are that close to him, nothing will separate you, not even death. Especially not death. Death is the way to eternal life - the still waters, the green pastures.

Now the Christian life is a joyful one, but it's also a very demanding way of living. Because for all our talk of being forgiven, we also need to be forgiving. If the gospel, as simply as we can put it, is *Your sins are forgiven*, we have to share that with everyone else. Jesus said, "if you forgive someone's sins, they are forgiven. If you don't forgive them, they're not". So it's all very well for me to believe that God has forgiven me the awful thing I did to you, or the unkind thing I said, but you have to forgive me as well, or I feel terrible. Forgive, forgive, forgive. That's a lot of what being a Christian is about. And Jesus calls us to serve others like he served us. Beginning at home, with the ones nearest, and then spreading out into our neighbourhood, our whole society, and everyone in the world we can help by working for peace, and working for justice. And the only way to live this life is in the strength we get through Jesus. We listen to him in our daily Bible readings, and in our prayers. "My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish." That's our hope. So we must remain faithful to Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

*I've just realised I called King David an old man, though when he died, he was a year younger than I am now. I take that back.

Ron

Hymn Suggestion

The best-known hymn setting of 'The Lord is my shepherd' is probably Crimond. Type in 'The Lord is my shepherd Crimond' into Youtube and you will find this. There is also an excellent modern version by Stuart Townend. This will come up if you simply type in 'The Lord is my shepherd'.

Points for Prayers

- Thanksgiving for Jesus' ministry as the Good Shepherd
- Thanksgiving for care, skill and courage of NHS workers and those in care homes
- Those suffering from coronavirus in hospitals, care homes and at home
- Continuing need for further largescale testing
- Prayers for wisdom in government decisions particularly regarding the future of the lockdown and any plans announced next week
- Funerals needing to take place under new restrictions with only family mourners. Ron is taking a funeral on Monday week, 11th May.
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

Diocesan weekly livestreamed services and reflections

Bishop Peter and Bishop Ruth will be livestreaming a mid-week Eucharist each week and offering recorded reflections each Sunday.

For further details please see the Diocesan website.

Church of England Daily Hopeline

The Archbishop of Canterbury has launched a new telephone service, 'Daily Hopeline'. If you ring the free number 0800 804 8044 you can hear a recorded message and can also listen to well-known hymns along with prayers and a reflection based on a hymn.

Premier Radio

Available from Premier Radio (DAB radio and channel 725 via Freeview TV)

Sunday morning of sacred music, songs and teaching etc, 7.00am-12.00 noon

Includes 'Hearts and Hymns' by Pam Rhodes, 8.00 to 10.0am with great variety of hymns and accompanying information.

Bible studies on weekday mornings.

Some other streamed resources

Here are a selection of some streamed resources available online which you may find helpful:-

- The Royal School of Church Music website provides a Hymn of the Day and Sunday Self-Service with music, readings and prayers.
- The Prayer Book Society has details of online streaming of BCP services.

An inclusive Communion celebrated on behalf of the benefice

Ron and Pam will be celebrating Communion regularly in their home each Sunday at 10.00am. Please be aware of this because even though no-one can join them they are praying for us all and hope that you will feel included in this act of Communion.

Growing as a worshipper, a servant and a family

*We pray that 'we might live in love,
as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us' (Ephesians 5:2)*