



AT HOME SERVICE

Sunday 26th April 2026

compiled by Barbara Dalton - Local Preacher in training

Call to worship

Listen to the voice that is calling you.
Reject the other things calling you away.
Follow where Jesus leads.
Enter the gateway to new life.
Come, live life to the full.
Heavenly Father, our shepherd,
let us follow your voice
as you lead us to rest and peace
and life everlasting. **Amen**



Hymn 480 StF

1] The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want.
he makes me down to lie
in pastures green; he leadeth me
the quiet waters by.

2] My soul he doth restore again;
and me to walk doth make
within the paths of righteousness,
even for his own Name's sake.

3] Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
yet will I fear no ill;
for thou art with me; and thy rod
and staff my comfort still.

4] My table thou hast furnished
in presence of my foes;
my head thou dost with oil anoint,
and my cup overflows.

5] Goodness and mercy all my life
shall surely follow me;
and in God's house forevermore
my dwelling place shall be.

Psalm 23

John 10: 1-10

Jesus the Good Shepherd

"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.

Reflection

A shepherd’s daily routine would have involved ensuring his sheep had access to pasture and water, keeping them safe and searching for those who strayed too far. Psalm 23 sees God’s care as shepherd like, abundant rather than menial in the life it opens up: ‘my cup overflows’ (v.5) with God’s goodness and mercy.

The readings are connected by the theme of shepherding, which is celebrated in Psalm 23 and the parable of the good shepherd in John 10 likens Jesus to a shepherd who acts as the gateway to abundant life for his sheep.

Have you noticed how we herd sheep? It’s from behind, perhaps with a sheep dog, or even a quad bike, guiding them where they need to go, encouraging them in a certain direction. We think of sheep dog trials, where shepherds and their dogs race to round up the sheep in record time. But the sheep do know the shepherd’s voice.

The method was different in Jesus’ time and in the Middle East even today. As John’s Gospel shows, the shepherd goes before the sheep and has a series of calls that the sheep recognise. They also know his or her voice and each sheep really would have a name that the shepherd would call. For safety, in times of bad weather or under threat of attack, the shepherd would use a sheep pen that would actually be more like a courtyard. The gate to this would be kept by a gatekeeper and they would only let the shepherd through. In this passage Jesus says: ‘Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep’ (v.7).

A recent trip to Morocco showed a remarkable illustration to this statement of Jesus. The Moroccan camel herders needed to keep their camels safe at night in the desert. The camels were penned in and the herders themselves lay down to complete the enclosure. They are the gate for the camels, risking themselves with the wild animals and other threats of the desert at night. Similarly, Jesus is the one who protects the sheep from the threats around them. The ‘thieves and bandits’ (v.8) who came before were ignored by the sheep as they did not recognise their voices. Jesus, the gate, did not let them prevail.

Voice is a very powerful sound. I have caught my breath before when hearing the voice of someone who had died on discovering an old voicemail message. We can still recognise voices that we may not have heard for many years. But do we recognise God’s voice calling us by name? I wonder where God’s voice is calling to us personally today? Perhaps it is calling us into safety, away from things that aren’t good for us. Maybe this is you. Or perhaps it is calling us to pasture, like the sheep. God knows what is good for us, and what we need. Perhaps, like the sheep, we need to go to pasture, to rest, maybe, to eat good and nourishing food, and to lie down. Can we listen for God’s voice together, attentively, and follow what God is calling us to, both individually and collectively?

Intercessional Prayers

Dear Lord, help us to listen to the voice of Jesus: **and follow where he leads.**

As we come together now to pray for the needs of the world, help us to focus on who you are. Help us to choose you to be our great influencer. Help us not to listen to the voices in the world that would turn us away from you but instead to focus on your words and your ways. We pause for a moment to confess, in the silence, times when other voices have had priority over yours this week.

Help us to learn from these experiences so that, when we face the same situations again, we will know how to focus on your guidance and leading instead of going our own way.

We also think now about times this week when we had the courage to follow your lead. Help us to grow in our faith so that it becomes easier and easier to go your way and not ours.

Dear Lord, help us to listen to the voice of Jesus: **and follow where he leads.**

We pray for our world, where so many leaders and rulers do not follow your way, Lord Jesus. We ask that you would show yourself clearly to all those in power so that they choose to follow. We lift particular places of conflict and pain to you this week: Iran, Sudan, Ukraine, Yemen, and other places of conflict no longer in the news. Lord, raise up people of courage and peacemakers in these lands whose influence will lead to a cessation of violence and, instead, your reign of peace.

Dear Lord, help us to listen to the voice of Jesus: **and follow where he leads.**

We pray for our own government, asking that its ministers will be people of integrity. We pray for those who are decision-makers, that they will be given (and listen to) wisdom. We continue to pray for an end to the strikes and unsettling situations. We pray for all those who just cannot make ends meet anymore and are in despair. We continue to pray for our foodbanks and other support agencies. Help us as individuals, and as a church community, to seek your wisdom on what more we might be able to do to help others in our local communities.

Dear Lord, help us to listen to the voice of Jesus: **and follow where he leads.**

Dear Lord, we pray for those who are in particular need of your comfort and sustaining love right now. We pray for those who are ill, in sadness or in confusion. We lift up to you those who are anxious or depressed, asking you to give them a revelation of your joy. Bring peace to those in distress. Especially I remember..... Give me the wisdom to know how to be a help, a comfort and support.

Dear Lord, help us to listen to the voice of Jesus: **and follow where he leads.**

As we go into this new week, go before us, Lord, so that we can see where you are leading. Whether life is very normal this week or full of surprises and unexpected moments, help us to keep our eyes firmly fixed on you and our ears tuned to listen to your voice.

All these prayers we ask in the name of Jesus, our Good Shepherd. **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:634 StF

1] Fight the good fight with all thy might,
Christ is thy strength and Christ thy right;
lay hold on life, and it shall be
thy joy and crown eternally.

2] Run the straight race, through God's good grace,
lift up thine eyes and seek his face;
life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path and Christ the prize.

3] Cast care aside, lean on thy Guide;
his boundless mercy will provide;
trust, and thy trusting soul shall prove
Christ is its life and Christ its love.

4] Faint not nor fear, his arms are near;
he changeth not, and thou art dear;
only believe, and thou shalt see
that Christ is all in all to thee.

John Samuel Bewley Monsell (1811-1875)

Prayer

Lord, as we finish this worship time, go before us.
Let us hear your voice this week
and lead us through the gate
to live an abundant life with you. **Amen**

As you walk past doors or gates this week,
pray for people who might pass through them or work behind them.

