

Sunday 21 April 2024

The Fourth Sunday of Easter



Sermon © Gareth Farnon-Jone.

Prayers of intercession © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

Liturgy © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration are included at the end.

The hymn can be accessed via a YouTube link. Please click on the links.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

HYMN 1 [The King of Love my shepherd is](#) (click on this link to hear the hymn)

[The King of Love my shepherd is](#) (different version)

[The King of Love](#) (alternative version)

The Preparation

**All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,

with all your soul, with all your mind,

and with all your strength.'

And the second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed for us.

Let us therefore rejoice by putting away all malice and evil

and confess our sins in penitence and faith,

firmly resolved to keep God's commandments

and to live in love and peace with all.

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria

All Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

The Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Easter

Almighty God,
whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life:
raise us, who trust in him,
from the death of sin to the life of righteousness,
that we may seek those things which are above,
where he reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

The rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, 'By what power or by what name did you do this?' Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders, if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. This Jesus is,

'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders;
it has become the cornerstone.'

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.'

Acts 2:5-12

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the First Letter of St John

We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?

Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us. *1 John 3:16–end*

HYMN 2 Like a shepherd

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All Glory to you O Lord.

Jesus said, ‘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’.

John 10:11–18

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

Today we have heard from John's Gospel, John's Gospel is quite different from the other three Gospels in how it tells us the Good News.

John's Gospel puts much more emphasis on the nature of Christ, it does not tell so much of the narrative story of the life of Jesus but helps us to understand His nature and His mission on earth.

Remember just how John's Gospel opens, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". John leaves us in no doubt, Jesus was there at the start, at the beginning of creation with God.

Jesus used many parables to explain His ministry to us, The Good Samaritan, The Prodigal Son, and Mustard Seed are all familiar to us and they are the way Jesus gave examples, not just to His disciples but also to us so that we may understand how to live our lives.

John's Gospel contains no parables at all, and, as mentioned before, John's Gospel reveals to us the nature of Christ when He was on earth. What John's Gospel does contain, and not found in the other three Gospels are seven statements, these are known as the 'I Am' statements.

Let's briefly remind ourselves of them:

'I am the bread of life.'

'I am the light of the world.'

'I am the resurrection and the life.'

'I am the good shepherd.'

'I am the way, the truth, and the life.'

'I am the true vine.'

And the one that we have just heard, 'I am the gate for the sheep'.

Jesus uses the words 'I am' very deliberately. In the book of Exodus, Moses asks God what he should tell the Israelites what God's name is. God replies by saying 'I AM WHO I AM', God then says "This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you'".

To the disciples of Jesus, who were Jews themselves, they would have understood that Jesus, by using these words was telling them that He is God. Even today, Jewish people do not use the term 'I am' when talking about God as the term is seen as too holy, instead they use the word Yahweh, we sometimes use this name ourselves, although we use the English pronunciation, Jehovah.

Christ, by His words and deeds needed to explain to people that He was the Messiah that they were waiting for. He wasn't, as many people expected a mighty warrior mounted on a war horse sweeping all before Him. No, He was just the

opposite, a humble man, a man of healing and kindness as we know today. To explain this to those around Him took time, and these I am sayings are an important part of His message.

Jesus, in this passage wasn't just teaching His disciples, he was also talking to the Pharisee's , a Jewish sect that along with the Sadducees, another different sect, saw Jesus as nothing more than an upstart, a trouble maker, someone who was a problem to them.

The Pharisees saw themselves as the shepherds of God's flock. Jesus chooses to not only challenge them but also to discredit them. Shepherds at this time stayed with their flocks at night, the sheep would be put into a pen and the shepherd would lie down and sleep in the gateway, therefore nothing could get past the shepherd to disturb the flock. Jesus, by saying that He is the gate means that no one can get to God except through Christ. Everyone, no matter how pious, how devout, or from whatever sect they belonged to, can come to the Lord except through Jesus Christ.

Just imagine how this seemed to people at the time. In modern terms Jesus has dropped a bombshell! He compares the Pharisees, these so-called Holy men to thieves and bandits. Jesus was telling His followers to forget all they believed and knew and to follow Him.

Once inside the gate Jesus will keep us safe, as a shepherd cares for his flock Jesus cares for us. We may pass in and out of the gate at our own free will, not to leave the flock and to rejoin as and when we want but to leave to find good pasture, this pasture is a life of service and prayer that becomes nourishment for our souls.

We, as Christians, know that sometimes the way to God is not always easy, we have to make a choice. Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and many people take that way. The gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and few people find it ...' (Matthew 7:13-14).

But we know that this is the only way, it may be difficult at times but look at the rewards, eternal life in God's kingdom. There can be no greater prize, no greater gift than this. Jesus Christ is the gate, our means of accessing the Lord and of receiving eternal salvation from Him.

I would like to close with a couple of lines of Psalm 23 which frames this well

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures,
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
Surely such gifts are worth taking the more difficult path to reach?
Amen.

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

**All This is our faith.
We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

These prayers are inspired by Psalm 23

We pray to the Lord our Shepherd. We thank you for looking after us, guiding and protecting us. As sheep of your fold, help us as we follow you and to keep you in view at all times.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

‘You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.’ We thank you for all that is good in our lives—our blessings and joys. We ask your help on those who have too little, who suffer from material want. In the following moment of silence, we pray especially for ...

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

'Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil.' Protect us from all that is evil, including our own feelings and misunderstandings. Protect your Church and all agencies who minister and give light. In the following moment of silence, we pray especially for ...

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

'He restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.' We pray for those who are suffering in body, mind or spirit; those whose pilgrimage feels arid or painful; those who have wandered from the right paths. In the following moment of silence, we pray especially for ...

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

'I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.' We pray for those who have passed from this world to the next. We pray for their families and friends. In the following moment of silence, we pray especially for ...

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

The peace

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then were they glad when they saw the Lord. Alleluia.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Loving shepherd of thy sheep (click on this link to hear the hymn)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

God the Father,
by whose love Christ was raised from the dead,
open to you who believe the gates of everlasting life.

God the Son,
who in bursting the grave has won a glorious victory,
give you joy as you share the Easter faith.

God the Holy Spirit,
whom the risen Lord breathed into his disciples,
empower you and fill you with Christ's peace.

And the blessing of God the Almighty:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 The Lord is my shepherd
The Lord is my shepherd
The Lord is my shepherd
The Lord is my shepherd
The Lord is my shepherd

(traditional version)
(different tune)
(different tune again)
(acapella version)
(Celtic version)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

Father, you made the world and love your creation.
You gave your Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour.
His dying and rising have set us free from sin and death.
And so we gladly thank you,
with saints and angels praising you, and saying,

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us.
Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

Merciful Father,
you gave your Son Jesus Christ to be the good shepherd,
and in his love for us to lay down his life and rise again:
keep us always under his protection,
and give us grace to follow in his steps;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.