

Sunday 30 April 2023

The Fourth Sunday of Easter



Sermon © Lucie Reilly.

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

This Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

All Glory be to God in Heaven,
Songs of joy and peace we bring,
Thankful hearts and voices raising,
To creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,
Glory be to God our King:
Glory be to God our King.

Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,
Bore the load of this world's sin;
Only Son of God the Father,
You have brought us peace within.
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,
Now your glorious reign begin:
Now your glorious reign begin.

**You O Son of God are Holy,
You we praise with one accord.
None in heav'n or earth is like you,
Only you are Christ the Lord.
With the Father and the Spirit,
Ever worshipped and adored:
Ever worshipped and adored.**

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 Apostles devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. *Acts 2:42-end*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the First Letter of St Peter

It is to your credit if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, where is the credit in that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.

'He committed no sin,
and no deceit was found in his mouth.'

When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

1 Peter 2:19-end

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

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, '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.

John 10:1-10

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

Today is widely known as Good Shephard Sunday because each year the liturgy on the Fourth Sunday of Easter is taken from different sections of John 10, where Jesus speaks of himself as the 'good shepherd' Today we focus on the first part of the charter, verses 1–10. There are two version:

- I am the *gate* for the sheep (10:7) for example the New International Version
- I am the *door* of the sheep (10:7) for example the New King James Version

In most of the modern Bible translations it reads as 'the gate'. More traditional versions such as the King James Version, the term is translated as 'the door'. It really isn't a contradiction as the context is the same. A gate or door has two main purposes which are described in the passage. One purpose is to keep people out. At night I'm sure we all lock the doors to our houses. In this way a door is used to keep people out. It keeps out people from wandering into our houses, people who should not be there. The same is true with a gate. At the end of my garden, we have a gate. Now, if you pass my house, that gate will be closed, locked. Why? Because we have a big dog who, we want to keep safe. And that's the real reason we lock our doors as well, isn't it? It's to protect the people inside.

It's believed the shepherds, back in the Bible times used to put the sheep in a pen at night. This is what this passage refers to. It could be a cave or more often it would simply be an enclosure built somewhere in the field. It would be a circular enclosure built with stones or made from branches and it would be completely closed except for one narrow entrance where the sheep went in and out. Usually, the entrance would not have a gate across it but would simply be a gap. But at night when the sheep were in the pen, the shepherd himself would lie across the entrance. So, the shepherd himself became the gate. By lying across the entrance, the shepherd could keep close watch on the sheep and protect them from wild animals or sheep thieves.

A door or gate is different to a wall. A wall would be more effective at keeping something out so if this is what Jesus was driving at then he may have said 'I am the wall'. But a gate's main purpose is to allow people to pass through it. It opens to yield a gap in the wall, a legitimate way through. If someone wants to come into your house, you expect them to come in through the door, wouldn't you? You wouldn't expect a visitor to climb in through a window. If someone came into your house through the window you would probably call the police. The window is not the proper way into the house, the right way in is through the door.

Jesus is the gate (or door)

In the preceding chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus is talking to the Pharisees about being blind. And the Pharisees seem to prove his point when Jesus gives them this illustration and once again, they just don't understand what he means. So, Jesus spells it out to them and in verse 7 says 'I am the gate' or in the KJV 'I am the door'. But a gate or door *to what?* Jesus makes this clear too, in verse 9 where he says, 'Whoever enters through me will be saved'. So, it doesn't take a genius to work out that Jesus is the gate to our salvation. This is what John has been trying to let us know all the way through this gospel.

The Jews had long understood that the Messiah would bring salvation. The coming of the Messiah was something they looked forward to. They thought of course that the Messiah would be a mighty warrior that would get rid of the Romans. There are several prophecies in the Old Testament that refer to the Messiah. So, it seems that from the Jewish point of view, the title of 'Messiah' was the key. Whoever held the post of Messiah was therefore the gate to salvation. By saying he was the gate, Jesus was also revealing himself as the Messiah. His references to those climbing in another way, who he calls thieves and robbers refers to the false Messiahs that came before and after him. There were several who claimed to be the Messiah, but they were false. They had no interest in the sheep for a start; they were only interested in their own fame and glory. But perhaps more importantly, it is God who decides who fills this post. Verse 3 says 'The watchman opens the gate for him'. God the father appointed Jesus to be the Saviour of the world. He is the 'anointed one' and therefore the one and only true Messiah and the only way to salvation is to go through him.

There are plenty of people who still believe that you can get to heaven by some other means. One of the most popular views is that you can get to heaven by good works. But the Bible tells us clearly that no one hits the standards that God requires. For example, Romans 3:23 says, 'For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God'. Therefore, none of us will ever be able to make it on good deeds alone. Another view is that because God is a God of love, he will simply let everyone in. I'm afraid that isn't true either. Again, the Bible tells us that not everyone will get in, in fact it goes as far as to say only a few find the way in (Matthew 7:13-14).

Enter through the gate.

So, we know that Jesus is the gate. The only way for us to be saved is to go through Jesus, he alone is the door to salvation, he alone is the gateway.

Have you found the gate yet? And if you have found the gate, have you entered through it? 'Entering Heaven' means going *through* Jesus, which means believing

in him. If you have accepted Jesus as your saviour then you can be certain of your salvation. If you haven't then, why not: what is holding you back, what is stopping you from going through the gate? Jesus is the ONLY way to be saved. God's desire is for you to be part of the sheepfold. To those who believe in him, Jesus opens the gate. Through the gate is green pasture, a safe place in Jesus' sheepfold. Enter through the gate and in Jesus words, you will 'have life, and have it to the full'.

If you're not sure how to go through the gate, then let's talk about it, let's pray about it, talk to anyone you know who has made that decision to follow Jesus. Last week we talked about not feeling Jesus is those dark times, about not recognising his voice and the companion who is vaguely familiar, today, I'm talking and asking you today, to recognise that voice and accept the invitation. Because going through this gate gives life, and not just life after death, but life for today. That is God's desire for us, but it can only be achieved by going through the gate.

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

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

[\(traditional version\)](#)
[\(different tune\)](#)
[\(different tune again\)](#)
[\(acapella version\)](#)
[\(Celtic version\)](#)

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.

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.