

Parish of St. Thomas, Apostle & Martyr, Ipswich

3rd May 2020 - Third Sunday of Easter

Collect: Risen Christ, faithful shepherd of your Father's sheep: teach us to hear your voice and to follow your command, that all your people may be gathered into one flock, to the glory of God the Father.
Amen.



Psalm 23: The Divine Shepherd

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;
3 he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
4 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.
5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
6 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.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

They devoted themselves to the apostle's 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)

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John (10.1-10)

"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.

This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, o Christ.

Reflection:

The theme that stood out for me in our two readings today is trust. In the gospel reading, Jesus is talking about sheep following the shepherd, and we are also familiar with the image of Jesus himself being the shepherd. And of course what that means for us, is that we are the sheep. We follow. We are led. I think in today's world that can be very comforting - the sheep don't have to know what lies ahead, they don't need to know where they are going. All the sheep have to do is know who to trust, and to follow that person.

If we stick with this image for a minute, notice that Jesus explains that the sheep know the shepherd's voice, they are called by name, and they only trust the one who cares for them. So for us, how do we discern Jesus' voice, when nothing else is familiar and we have even less ability to predict what lies ahead than usual? How do we hear the call of God?

Well, a large part of it is through familiarity. The sheep have to *learn* the shepherd's voice. The more time they spend together, the more familiar they are with each other, and the more trust is built up. And you can draw a parallel here with our own relationships with God. To trust God, especially in times of crisis, loss, or uncertainty, isn't always that easy, or come to us particularly naturally. We often much prefer to feel like we're in control of things ourselves, and if this feeling is suddenly removed, we can feel very uprooted and at sea. But this trust we are talking about is built up over time, as our relationship with God is developed through prayer, worship, reflecting, and noticing. If we can learn to be aware that God is with us through everything, good times and the bad, it becomes easier to notice God's presence, easier to know that whatever is going on, we can trust in the constant love and care of Jesus.

I also love that Jesus says 'he (the shepherd) calls his own sheep by name'. Our names are wrapped up with who we are, they are how we are known, they carry emotions and identity. They are so important to us - think how impressive it is when someone who perhaps we only met once, briefly, years ago, meets us again and they remember our name! God has known us by name from the moment we were born, and always will. Each one of us precious, called by God to trust and follow.

And if we turn to our reading from the Acts of the Apostles, this trust is crucial! These very first Christians are in a world even more chaotic and unpredictable than ours is at present. They don't have any church buildings they can use, and had to simply take things one day at a time, as more and more people joined them, and as they figured out how to follow and worship in new ways in new communities. They worshiped Jesus wherever they could, with a new crowd of Christians every day. They had no idea what lay ahead, that they were the seeds of a church which would carry far into the future and encompass millions of people. Instead, they just had to trust. To pray in their homes, to break bread and remember Jesus, to tell others the good news.

In all the years that followed, Christians, and humanity across the globe, experienced some terrible things. But what remained constant is faith - a trust in our God who is always with us as we step out into the unknown future.

We are finding new ways of being church right now, and will continue to have to do so, as we don't know what lies ahead or what the next months and years might look like. But what we can know for certain is that Jesus, the shepherd and guardian of our souls, is always leading the way, calling us by name to trust in him. - *Rev Cat*

May you may know the Peace of the risen Christ, who came and stood among his disciples and said 'Peace be with you'. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. ***Alleluia! The peace of the risen Christ be always with you.***

Here are the words of two hymns you may like to sing or pray this week

1 The King of love my shepherd is,
whose goodness faileth never.
I nothing lack if I am his,
and he is mine forever.

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

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

4 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.

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

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

1 Christ triumphant, ever reigning,
Saviour, Master, King!
Lord of heaven, our lives sustaining,
hear us as we sing:

*Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name.*

2 Word incarnate, truth revealing,
Son of Man on earth!
power and majesty concealing
by your humble birth:

3 Suffering servant, scorned, ill-treated,
victim crucified!
death is through the cross defeated,
sinners justified:

4 Priestly king, enthroned for ever
high in heaven above!
sin and death and hell shall never
stifle hymns of love:

5 So, our hearts and voices raising
through the ages long,
ceaselessly upon you gazing,
this shall be our song:



A free phone line of hymns,
reflections and prayers

If you would like to chat, please give us a ring:

Revd Jutta: 07958 360 564 Rev Cat 07530 412988 Roger Elmer 07810 274586
Sylvia Dickerson 07903 739487 Malcolm Gibbs 07906 663530 Mary Bullass 625135
Gloria Elmer 745590 Rev Jackie Sears 07962172639 Revd Pat Wright 01473 464748

Please pray for:

Those with chronic or long-term illness: Eric Dickerson, Rosemary, Adam, Jenny and Andrew Barfield, Kathy Steele, Frank D., Andrew Derrett, Peggy (Covid 19), Pat, Natacha, Christine, Stephen, Julie, Samantha, Jill, Rex, Molly Johansen, Marion (Val's sister-in-law)

Those undergoing treatment or currently ill: Mike Harding, Emily & family (9 years old with cancer), Juliet Adams, Matthew Hare, Gloria Elmer, Margaret Christian, Helen Harlow, Jean Dominy, Leslie Bloomfield, Pete Tancred, Val's niece & Michelle (Covid19), Katie (cancer), Peter (suspected cancer), Hazel Messenger (cancer, very ill)

All who are affected by the Coronavirus, their families and friends, in the UK and around the world; **for all health care staff, esp. those in care homes, and all who are working long hours in the service of others.** For all who are living alone and self-isolating.

For victims of conflict and natural disaster around the world, support agencies and peacemakers.

Those who have recently died, among them: *Alan Seeley, Phyllis Meadows* (former organist at St Thomas); *Fr Daniel Gooderham* (curate at St Thomas from 1962-64; aged 95. Keith Brisland stayed in touch with him,) **R.I.P.**



Birthdays this week:

Daniel Fisk (6th)
Rebecca Devine (6th)

Pray for members of the St Thomas Congregation (each week we will include a dozen names)

Andrea with Fiona & Patrick, Julie & Amber, Zuzana & Simon, Joan Scott, Marilyn (choir), Jackie & Brian, Hugh (organist), Jim & Daphne, Julie & Mark Stevens

Online Church Services:

Sunday 3 May : 10am ZOOM Worship

Tuesday 5 May 7.30pm LiveStream

Meditation on facebook/
StThomasPilgrimCommunity

Wednesday 13 May:

10 am Livestream Eucharist

facebook/StThomasIpswich

Sunday Worship Video & other Worship resources on the church facebook page.

Church Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/stthomasipswich/>

Church website:

<http://stthomasipswich.org.uk/>

Christian Aid Week 10-16 May

Love never fails. Coronavirus impacts all of us. But love unites us all.

This year we will not be able to organise the collection at Church, but we strongly urge you to support their appeal as the Coronavirus is creating extra danger and hardship in developing countries.

Go their website: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/christian-aid-week>

Join Quizian Aid, our exciting quiz for Christian Aid Week!

Hosted by Rev. Kate Bottley and celebrity guests, join Christian Aid's family friendly quiz, live on Facebook on **Saturday 2 May at 7.30pm.**

Contacts:

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Jutta's days off are: Fridays & Saturdays

Assistant Curate: Revd Cat Connolly

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Cat's day off: Mondays