

**Sunday 25 April 2021**

# The Fourth Sunday of Easter



Sermon © Lucie Fletcher.

Prayers of intercession © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

Liturgy © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

- All the Bible readings come from the *New Revised Standard Version*.
- The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration have been included at the end.
- The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please hover the mouse over each link, press Ctrl and then return.
- To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page, <http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

## Introduction and welcome

**HYMN 1 O Jesus I have promised** (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

### 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**

### 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.**

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins, to be our advocate in heaven, and to bring us to eternal life.

Therefore, let us 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**

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.

**All Amen.**

### **Psalm**

- 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. *Psalm 23*

## First reading

A reading from the Book of Acts

The next day [after the Apostles Peter and John had been teaching the forecourt of the Temple] their 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 4:5-12*

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*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN 2 [The King of love my shepherd is](#)** (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**

In today's Gospel Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd. Many other names are given to our Lord. He is called 'God' and 'Lord,' the 'Father of the Family,' the 'Promised Messiah,' the 'Saviour and Redeemer of His People.' He deserves them all, for He is, indeed, both God and Lord the Father of the family, which, as Messiah, He has redeemed and saved.

One name, however, is especially applicable to Him, that of the 'Good Shepherd.' Christ calls Himself, emphatically, the Good Shepherd; and it is beneficial for us to consider what this title of Christ means. We can then see more clearly, and we can realise what the shepherd is to the sheep, the more ready and willing shall we be to follow Christ, our Good Shepherd, as His faithful sheep.

Let's think more about Jesus as the Good Shepherd, what are the characteristics of a Christ the Good Shepherd?

**He cares for us** One of the most outstanding characteristics of Jesus was His love and compassion. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is concerned and interested in people. They matter to Him.

On one occasion Jesus and His disciples travelled to the other side of the Sea of Galilee by boat. Jesus went to sleep in the stern. A furious squall came up; the waves came into the boat. The boat was about to sink. The disciples rushed to Jesus, saying, 'Don't you care if we drown?' Jesus got up, rebuked the wind and calmed the waves. Jesus cared for those men. He did not want them to drown. He did not want them to suffer. He cares.

**He knows us** The eastern shepherds raised sheep for wool rather than for food. Thus, sheep were usually with a shepherd for years and were often known by descriptive names like 'Brown-leg' or 'Black-ear.' The shepherds knew each sheep, every one of them. Sheep know the shepherd's voice. The shepherd knows the uniqueness of each sheep.

Have we ever gone to a gathering, and didn't know anyone? We will have felt so alone, so isolated, so distant. Then all of a sudden someone from across the room calls our name. We are recognised. We are known. A flood of acceptance and honour comes over you. You relax, you belong. The Good Shepherd knows each of his sheep by name.

**He died for us** The good shepherd places his body between the sheep and vicious animals. He will die protecting the sheep. So, Jesus died for lost people. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, actually gave his life for us.

Five times in this text Jesus clearly affirmed the sacrificial nature of his death. His sacrifice was:

- A voluntary sacrifice: no one took Jesus' life; He willingly and voluntarily gave it up for us.
- A vicarious sacrifice: Jesus did not die as a martyr, killed by men; He died as a substitute, willingly laying his life down for us.
- A victorious sacrifice: Jesus did die, but He also rose again. The cross is empty. Jesus rose again. We serve a risen, victorious Saviour.
- Jesus sacrificed His life in order that we might be saved. He willingly gave His life for our lives. He became the sacrificial shepherd for us.

When we think of these characteristics of the Good Shepherd, we simply exclaim, 'What a Saviour!' Jesus is the Good Shepherd, a caring Shepherd, an understanding Shepherd, a sacrificial Shepherd.

Some of us may have been a bit taken aback when we heard Psalm 23 today. Because Psalm 23 is often read, for example, during a funeral. It may seem out of place to read it during our Sunday service. But it's very fitting that we read it on the Sunday that we hear of Christ as the Good Shepherd in the gospel.

This is not simply because the Psalm also uses the analogy of God as our shepherd. It is because the Psalm explains just how far that relationship of loving care extends. It is a reminder that our Lord is our shepherd at all times and in all places, not just in this life, but also the next. Because we are reminded in the psalm that we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

We are assured of this in the Gospel reading as well. Christ tells those gathered around him at the temple, 'My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.' We are assured that even after this life, our relationship with Christ, our Good Shepherd, will continue.

Christ has chosen to take on the role of our Good Shepherd and to enter into that relationship with his sheep. But if we are considering ourselves to be his sheep, then we should work to have the proper characteristics of Christ's sheep.

We are told the sheep hear Christ's voice, so we should strive to learn what Christ is calling us to do in the world, through reading Scripture, through praying, and through discussions with others whom we know to be faithful, so that we are able to hear Christ's voice clearly. And if we know Christ's voice that means we are also able to distinguish it from other voices, which may be telling us things that are contrary to Christ. And just as the sheep follow the Good shepherd, so we, too, must follow Christ.

We must seek to not only know and understand his commandments, but also to carry them out—to find the best ways to love God and to love our neighbour, and then do those things. We must avoid the temptation to let other things in our lives lead us, like the desire for wealth, or fear that others will look at us strangely if we model our lives according to our faith. But we are never expected to do these things alone. Because our shepherd is always with us to guide us. And we have each other to look towards when we feel like we may be going astray.

Let us help each other to come to a greater understanding of what our Good Shepherd is calling us to do in this world, both as individuals and as a church community, let us seek to strengthen our relationship with Christ so that we may better hear his voice and follow his commands, and let us remember that, just as a sheep belongs to a of a flock, so we too belong to this faith family. 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**

*A shepherd knows the sheep by name*

We pray for all those who struggle with identity. Those who don't know themselves, and those seeking to rebuild their lives in different ways. We ask that they may find meaning and purpose as they accept the name of Christian and disciple.  
Lord in your mercy

**All Hear our prayer.**

*A shepherd looks after the sheep*

We pray for all those entrusted with a flock, whether a congregation of Christians growing as disciples but everyone in any position of trust. We ask that you will flood their ministry with love and peace, gentleness and wisdom, and all the gifts and fruits of your Holy Spirit.  
Lord in your mercy

**All Hear our prayer.**

*A shepherd lays down their life for the sheep*

We pray for all those who find caring seems life-long and life-draining. We ask your strength and perseverance on each. We also pray your help on those for whom they lay down their lives.  
Lord in your mercy

**All Hear our prayer.**

*A shepherd is the gate to the sheepfold*

We pray for all those whose lives act as a witness to their faith—so all of us. Today, to prayer for those who are dying or have died, passing from this earthly sheepfold

to a heavenly fold, to live with the Lord our Good Shepherd. We also ask your strength and compassion on those who minister to them.

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**

Peace to you from God our heavenly Father.

Peace from his Son Jesus Christ who is our peace.

Peace from the Holy Spirit, the Life-giver

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

**All And also with you.**

**HYMN 3 Alleluia! Sing to Jesus!** (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

## **The Dismissal**

The peace of God which passes all understanding,  
keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God,  
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.  
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 Shine, Jesus, shine!** (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

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.