

Sunday 8 May 2022

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 appear 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>

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

Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, 'Please come to us without delay.' So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, 'Tabitha, get up.' Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. Meanwhile he stayed in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon, a tanner. *Acts 9:36-43*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the Revelation of St John the Divine

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!' And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, singing, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.'

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, 'Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?' I said to him, 'Sir, you are the one that knows.' Then he said to me, 'These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.' *Revelation 7:9-17*

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.

At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.' Jesus answered, 'I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. 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. What my Father has given me is greater than

all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one.'

John 10:22-30

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

Very often at the start of an episode of a television drama series you get a brief recap of what's gone on the week before to remind us of what's been happening, so it might be helpful today if we do something similar to set the scene for this week's episode of our Gospel reading.

So, 'previously in chapter ten of St John's Gospel' Jesus has been talking about the relationship between a shepherd and his sheep, identifying himself in two of his 'I Am' sayings as the gate for the sheep and the good shepherd. He describes the characteristics of a good shepherd which enable their sheep to feel safe, secure, and cared for and therefore able to live without anxiety or fear.

The Pharisees, whom Jesus is talking would have known that in their scriptures the relationship between shepherd and sheep is used as an image to describe the relationship between a king and his people, In Ezekiel, chapter 34, for example, God says that he himself will be a true shepherd to his people, to those who have been neglected, led astray, and abused by false shepherds. He also says that he will set up David, to be the shepherd, or king, of Israel and of course it was expected that the promised Messiah, would be a descendant of David.

Now fast-forward to today's story. It's the Festival of Dedication, or Hanukkah, when the liberation and re-dedication of the Temple about 150 years earlier is remembered and celebrated. These events took place following a revolution led by Judas Maccabaeus against occupying forces which resulted in Judas becoming king over Israel and founding a dynasty even though he was not a descendant of David.

It's during this Festival that Jesus talks about being the Good Shepherd in a land once again occupied by a foreign power—this time the Roman Empire. We can perhaps understand why there's a sense of expectation and excitement, tension and suspicion, in Jerusalem as people speculate about Jesus, a descendant of King David, being the Messiah, the true king who would overthrow the Roman imposers and regain freedom for the people of Israel.

It's in this context that the religious leaders put pressure on Jesus to declare categorically whether or not he is the Messiah. However, it's not a question that has a straightforward answer. He certainly isn't the sort of Messiah they have in mind, and they don't seem to have understood him at all. So, Jesus says that he has

already answered them both in what he has been saying and in the things he has done in his Father's name. He goes back to using the image of a good shepherd whose sheep know him, recognise his voice, trust him, and follow him. And as a good shepherd protects his sheep so Jesus says he will keep his people safely in eternal life.

The problem is that these religious leaders don't recognise the voice of the Good Shepherd, the true Messiah, and they don't understand his language. This presents a major barrier to honest communication between them and Jesus and in the final section of this chapter they try to stone Jesus and try to arrest him on charges of blasphemy.

The Pharisees, and people who thought as they did, had a clear picture in their minds of what the longed-for Messiah would be like and what he would do. His voice and the language he used would be about revolution, victory over enemies, power, and a triumphant kingship established in this world.

Jesus uses a different language—one of peace and reconciliation, justice tempered with mercy, healing and forgiveness and his kingdom is the kingdom of heaven where God alone rules with love and compassion.

Jesus 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 a relationship with his sheep. 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 need to 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. Our Gospel reading today invites us to think about the voices and the languages that we ourselves understand and use. Around us are many voices speaking the language of violence, extremism, hatred, jealousy, prejudice, and pride.

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.

Surely our calling is to use the language of love to reach out to God's lost sheep who are longing for the care and protection that only our Good Shepherd can provide.

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.

All Amen.

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

All Amen.

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

All Amen.

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.