



Order of Service
8th May 2022

INTROIT TiS 220 This, this is the God we adore

CALL TO WORSHIP

Day by day, God leads us:

**to the deep, deep pools of peace,
to the green, lush lawns of grace.**

Day by day, Jesus calls us:

**to pour out ourselves in service,
to anoint the stranger with hope.**

Day by day, the Holy Spirit shows us:

**the community we could be,
the family we are called to become.**

OPENING PRAYER

Eternal God,
from whose gentle hands
none can snatch us away:
give us faith to believe
that we are known and loved
with a passion strong enough
to bring the whole world back to you;
through Jesus Christ, who is one with the source of life. Amen.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

"We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather today and pay respects to their elder's past, present and emerging."

WELCOME

HYMN TiS 152 Joyful, joyful, we adore you

BIBLE READING : Psalm 23

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

We praise you, O God, for giving shape and meaning to the ancient image of yourself as shepherd through the person of Jesus Christ. In him, your compassion has been eternally revealed, giving your rod and staff the human face of love. Through Jesus' persistence-even to death – in seeking and saving the lost, your goodness and mercy has been abundantly experienced. His ongoing life continues to guide and lead us in paths of justice and righteousness. How can we do other than praise and adore you, O God, for such depth of care for us, and how can we do other than listen to Jesus' voice as he calls us to follow him. And yet, we confess that there are times when we fail to hear and obey his call because our lives are so filled with noise and self-centred activities.



Forgive us, O God, for the times when we put our own comfort first and fail to reach out and accompany those who are going through difficult times – those who feel imprisoned in a valley of shadows and find themselves overwhelmed by life.

Jesus, good shepherd:

help us to take the time and make the space to hear your call to us.

The call to reveal your love, compassion and comfort wherever you need us to bind up the wounds of the victims of today's society (*silent confession*)

Forgive us, O God, for ignoring the plight of those deprived of the basic necessities of life – food and shelter.

Jesus, good shepherd:

help us to take the time and make the space to hear your call to us.

The call to reveal in tangible and authentic ways, your passion for those who feel powerless to make any changes for good in their lives (*silent confession*)

Forgive us, O God, for enjoying the benefits of your goodness and mercy in our lives while exercising judgmental or unmerciful attitudes towards other people.

Jesus, good shepherd:

help us to take the time and make the space to hear your call to us.

The call to empty ourselves of all that is contrary to your life within us so that your goodness and mercies are enjoyed not as rewards to be hoarded but as gifts to be shared. In your name, we pray. Amen

Words of Assurance

Friends, hear the good news:

In Jesus Christ we are sought, we are found, we are forgiven, we are loved.

Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honour, power and might, be to our God forever and ever! Amen.

AN EARLY WORD

HYMN TIS 659 The Lord is my shepherd

BIBLE READINGS: John 10:22-30
Revelation 7:9-17

REFLECTION

The gospel passage we have read today is a small portion of a much longer conversation between Jesus and the crowd which follows the healing of a man born blind. Early in the conversation Jesus makes the claim that he is a shepherd who calls his sheep by name, and they follow him because they know his voice. More than that, he is the good shepherd: the one who lays down his life for the sheep, the one who knows his sheep, and his sheep know him, the one who gives life to the full.

The motif of a shepherd is encountered all the way through the scriptures. In the Old Testament the kings and other rulers of Israel and Judah were called shepherds, a designation which made sense when they exercised their role with integrity and fairness. Kings and rulers were entrusted with looking out for the welfare of God's people. They were responsible for defending them from attack, for administering justice, for taking care of the poor and needy, and for making provisions for the worship of the Lord.

However, as the Old Testament prophets made clear, the rulers of Israel and Judah regularly failed on every count. They "fed themselves and not the flock," and they had "scattered the sheep of the Lord's flock". The prophets proclaimed the hope that the Lord would intervene on behalf of the people, and that God would be their true Shepherd.



God spoke to the prophet Ezekiel, promising:

“I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness.”

Throughout the Psalms the Lord is presented as the shepherd of Israel and the one who guides the people like a flock. The best-known example of the bible’s shepherd imagery for God is Psalm 23:

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters.

He revives my soul and guides me along right pathways for his name’s sake.”

In rich symbolism, the psalm movingly depicts God as the true king of Israel and shepherd of God’s people. God gives them everything they need, and nothing is missing from God’s generous provisions. Sustenance, refreshment, beauty, and safety are all to be found among the Lord’s gifts for God’s people. The Lord’s strength defends them from their oppressors and saves them from dangers the way a shepherd protects their sheep from wolves, bears, and lions.

“Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”

God’s people rejoice, surrounded by the abundance of God’s love forever:

“Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

It’s this understanding of God as the Shepherd of Israel which forms the backdrop for Jesus’ teaching in the Gospel of John.

Jesus begins what is known as the Good Shepherd discourse by describing the relationship between the sheep and the shepherd: God knows them by name, and they recognize God’s voice. The relationship is direct and personal. God is not some far-off deity who is uninterested in God’s people. God loves them and calls them by name.

Like the Old Testament prophets, Jesus contrasts the Lord’s care for people with the failure of the Jewish leaders who came before him. He exposes them as false shepherds. Instead of caring for the flock of God they were thieves and robbers from whom the sheep needed protection. Jesus insists that the false shepherds only came to kill, to rob, and to destroy, but that he came to save the sheep and to give them abundant life. Jesus teaches that as Israel’s true Shepherd, the long-awaited Messiah, he knows us, loves us, and provides for us with the same knowledge, love, and care that God offered to God’s people. He even promises us the gift of eternal life.

By laying claim to the role of the Good Shepherd, Jesus confounds his listeners, who demand that Jesus give them some plain answers. “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.” Jesus upsets them further by telling them that they really ought to have discovered the answer for themselves when they had heard him teaching, and when he had done mighty signs before their eyes, but they had not listened or seen because they were not God’s sheep. He appears to rile them even more by pressing the question further. He declares, “The Father and I are one.” It was a remarkable statement, and it provoked a dramatic response -the crowd took stones in order to kill Jesus!

The crowd was clearly divided about the authentic identity of Jesus: Either Jesus was correct, and he was the Good Shepherd, or he was a blasphemer who deserved the harshest punishment.

Many who first heard Jesus’ claims to be one with God demanded evidence, signs that would demonstrate the truth of what he said. They wanted proof. Jesus gave them an answer when he declared, “I am the Good Shepherd; I know my own, and my own know me...and I lay down my life for the sheep... No one takes it from me; but I lay it down of my own accord, and I have power to take it up again.” The proof that Jesus gives that he is the Good Shepherd is his loving self-sacrifice for the people of God and the power of



his resurrection. Put another way, Good Friday and Easter Morning are the proof that Jesus of Nazareth is who he says he is.

On this Sunday – often known as Good Shepherd Sunday - we celebrate God’s great love as it is revealed in Jesus Christ’s total gift of himself on our behalf. He is the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep and took it up again, and it is he who has given us the abundance of eternal life. There are many times when the circumstances of life can make us feel really vulnerable, and it’s in these moments, and in every moment, that we need to hear afresh the words of promise Jesus offers, the promise that is at the heart of this passage and, indeed the whole Gospel: “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.*” God will not abandon us, Jesus will hold on to us through all things, and God will never, ever let us go. Thanks be to God.

HYMN TiS 145 The King of love my shepherd is

OFFERING and DEDICATION

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE LORD’S PRAYER

We pray in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray, saying:

***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.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever.
Amen.***

HYMN TiS 237 Hail Redeemer, King divine!

BENEDICTION

The Lord is our shepherd; we want for nothing.
We hunger and thirst no more.
The Lord gives rest and comfort to our souls.
God keeps us in perfect peace.
The Lord sustains us in the midst of trouble.
Our lives overflow with God’s love and grace.
Goodness and mercy will surely follow us always.
And we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever!

HYMN TiS 782 Go now in peace

