

RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

3 May 2020

The Shepherd. But Jesus also tells them that he is the good shepherd—just like an ordinary shepherd, but more so! He will not let go of his sheep, like the hired hands have done, because he owns the sheep—they are his and he is theirs. The good shepherd cares for the sheep and will do everything that is necessary for them. This close relationship that Jesus has with those who follow him is paramount. It is a relationship founded on the closeness of Heavenly Father and his Beloved Son. ‘Just as’, or ‘in the same way’, as Father loves Son, so Jesus the Good Shepherd loves his sheep. This is powerful, and that only increases. Jesus doesn’t just say that as shepherd he is prepared to lay down his life for his sheep. Rather, he says ‘and I lay down my life for the sheep.’ This is something that he is going to do; it will take place. This is the essential sacrificial nature of the relationship between Father and Son, and between the Son and those he loves and who love him. The good shepherd becomes the lamb sacrificed on the altar of the Temple, the once and for ever sin offering. Remember John the Baptist’s observation right back in John 1:29: ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’ All the evidence is now before us: Jesus’ own teaching, the testimony of others, the lived out experience of the disciples, the events of the cross and the empty tomb. Jesus is who he says he is—he is and can be no other. See, the Lamb of God!

Both/And. We will have often heard the expression ‘either/or’, we have to make a choice, we can’t have both. Yet that is not true here. You cannot have the privileges without the responsibilities. Here it is ‘both/and’. We follow Jesus who is both the shepherd and the lamb. We are promised life in its fulness but only in so far as we lay down our lives, take up our cross, and follow his way. There is absolutely no contradiction in the call of the Suffering Servant. We do have a choice, though. Will it be ‘yes’ or ‘no’?!

EPILOGUE

²⁴ ‘He himself bore our sins’ in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; ‘by his wounds you have been healed.’ ²⁵ For ‘you were like sheep going astray,’ but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.
(1 Peter 2:24-25)

SUGGESTED SONG

Mighty To Save
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDDE6aFS-A>

BLESSING

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. Amen.

<https://rydebaptist.xyz>

Dear Friends,

During this lengthy time when we cannot meet together in our usual place of worship on George Street, and all the more as time goes on, it is very important that we find ways to stay connected and, as far as is practically possible, to keep in contact and look after one another. This happens more naturally for some than others; some of us need more encouragement and reassurance; we are all very different people.

We do have a flexible system in place where everyone is on someone’s list as a pastoral contact, and there are a number of us who regularly phone around. However, no system is perfect, so if you want a chat or someone to pray for you please don’t wait for a call. Rather, get in touch with your pastoral contact, one of the deacons, a Christian friend, or the minister, and they will gladly spend time with you then, or call you back. The same applies if there are urgent needs that you have that we can help with.

I love the imagery of the shepherd and the sheepfold that we find in our readings this morning. It is the shepherd’s responsibility to keep all the flock safely together, but this is simpler said than done. Some sheep will stick close, right

under the shepherd’s nose; others will wander off and do their own thing, perhaps getting themselves into trouble or endangering the whole flock. At this time of year, some will be nurturing their young; whilst there may be those who are within sight but finding things a bit tough or a struggle. You get the picture. And when the sheepfold is out of bounds it is easier for the sheep to feel vulnerable and unprotected.

Those times when we can meet together online and see each other face to face, such as via Zoom for our Sunday Morning Fellowship Meeting at 10.30am or our Monday Prayer Meeting at 7.00pm, are especially valuable. If you are able to join us, you will be really very welcome. Don’t forget too that if you are reading this sheet on your computer or device you can click on the readings and songs, and also find other resources at <https://rydebaptist.xyz>

CALL TO WORSHIP

²¹ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ²² ‘He committed no sin, and no deceit was in his mouth.’
(1 Peter 2:21-22)

BIBLE READINGS

[Psalm 23](#)

[John 10:1-15](#)

[1 Peter 2:19-25](#)

SUGGESTED SONGS

Come, Now Is The Time To Worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USQn4lUmS20>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USQn4lUmS20>

The Lord's My Shepherd

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN4tPkXOMG0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN4tPkXOMG0>

PRAYER

Lord God our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this new day in which to worship and to live for you. Thank you for the rhythm that his day gives to the week and that we can regularly remember and commemorate our Risen Lord. This truly is the day that the Lord has made, so we will rejoice and be glad in it. Amen.

TO PONDER

If you have been closely following the various readings and reflections over the last few weeks, you might have noticed one or two recurring characters or themes. As I have been pondering them, they seem to come into sharp focus today. I just want to point out two. Firstly there is Peter, who was present at the empty tomb, in the upper room at the appearances of Jesus, and on the lake fishing when Jesus appeared to the dis-

ciples for breakfast. We're also working our way through the first of the letters Peter wrote to the early Church and is one of our readings today. How much do we know about Peter? For such a key figure, often referred to as the leader of the disciples, first among equals, there have been surprisingly few biographies written about him and a lot of what is conjectured about his later life comes from tradition (much of it stemming from the myths attached to his time in Rome and his elevation as first Pope). The later apostle, Paul, has more attention, yet Peter is really important too.

Secondly, somewhat unusually for a fisherman, Peter is explicitly called by Jesus to become a shepherd. This is a powerful Biblical image and a significant calling. Throughout the Old Testament God's people are referred to as his sheep, his flock, and their leaders as shepherds, who are either doing a good or a bad job. David, the writer of Psalm 23 is discovered as a youngster looking after the sheep and becomes the founding shepherd-king of the nation. By the time of Ezekiel (chapter 34) the nation-flock are scattered and leaderless and the Lord himself promises to come to shepherd his sheep. Isaiah 53 (quoted twice by Peter in our reading) points us to Jesus who is both the great shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep and also the sacrificial lamb who atones for our sin. He is the Suffering Servant who Peter, and we too, are called to follow.

TIME OF PRAYER

This week's 7/52 again contains lots of suggestions for prayer, and you will have your own list of people and situations to pray for, either written on paper or written on your heart. Today would be a good time to turn to Isaiah 53, and as you read it to pray about all the things we learn about Jesus and what he has done for the world. How has the world responded to Jesus; how do we respond to Jesus? For whose sake are we primarily called to live our lives?

SUGGESTED SONGS

Lord I Life Your Name On High

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVqWEtfpTgo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVqWEtfpTgo>

Indescribable

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLMVqNwypjA>

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MINI-SERMON OUTLINE

Introduction. It is always a good idea to have our imaginations switched on when reading the Bible. As Jesus teaches his disciples we can see images of them wandering in the countryside around Galilee and beyond. Today it is possible to wander those same hills and see the remains of stone walls with the giveaway doorways which tell us that here is a sheepfold. Such sheepfolds can be permanent or temporary fixtures on the landscape, but the designs very similar. They are also easily recognisable to modern shepherds around the world.

Bible. At first read, Jesus appears to be giving a lesson about how sheepfolds work. There is only one way in and out, and that is via the gate or doorway. The walls are there to keep invaders (wild animals or evil people) out, and the job of the shepherd is to guard the flock by literally being the gate—while sleeping and keeping watch, ready to respond to any alarm, whilst the occupants rest at peace within. However, today's lesson is different. Jesus is not mainly addressing his disciples, although they were present and it is clearly relevant for them too. Jesus is addressing the Pharisees, the ruling classes, the religious leaders who have been tasked as shepherds to look after the flock of God's people but have largely failed. They don't understand their own task, and they certainly don't understand who Jesus is as the Messiah, the Chosen One of God who comes in response to all their hopes and longings, outlined in Isaiah 53.

The Gate. So Jesus tells them who he is and how things will be different from now on. He is the gate. Unlike previous leaders who have squandered their positions and endangered their people, things have now changed. If they wonder why crowds are flocking to hear Jesus teaching, it is because they recognise in Jesus the way, the truth and the life. Those who come in and out through Jesus have the two things they truly need: salvation from the consequences of their sin, and a new quality lifestyle.