

Forth Sunday of Easter

Prayers, Readings, Reflection and Song.

“Welcome to another short act of worship for the Parish Church of St Martin. For those who are able to follow it as written or listen in, I hope it offers some comfort, encouragement and a sense of being together despite the distance between us.” Rev Jonny



Be still, and draw yourself closer to the God who rests beside you, before you and within you.

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 sun of righteousness has dawned with healing in his wings. Let us come to the light of Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith

All **God our Father,
long-suffering, full of grace and truth,
you create us from nothing and give us life.
You give your faithful people new life in the water
of baptism.
You do not turn your face from us, nor cast us aside.
We confess that we have sinned
against you and our neighbour.
We have wounded your love and marred your image in
us.
Restore us for the sake of your Son,
and bring us to heavenly joy,
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

God promises us a place with him for ever and he has raised us to new life in Jesus Christ our Lord. May we know his forgiveness and peace and the freedom to serve him in newness of life.

All **Amen**

The Collect for the day

Let us pray that we may hear and respond to our Master's voice

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.**

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

The Gospel, 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.

All sing **Praise to you O Christ.**

Reflection

Where I grew up in the Lake District there's a particular breed of Sheep that most of the hill-farmers keep – the Herdwick. Not fluffy like a cloud, but rugged, mottled, with a keen, sharp gaze. They were brought by the Vikings nearly 1000 years ago and they survive every winter from December to April up on the fells at over 3000 feet. Sheep don't come much tougher than Herdwicks.

When I think of the Good Shepherd, I think of the fells. And I think of the endurance, resilience and strength that a northern shepherd needs. When your flock is on the hillside for the coldest months of the year, you have quite a job to bring them back down to the fold.

Those Old Testament Shepherds, among them Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Moses, David and Amos. They needed those qualities. Perhaps that's why God chose each of them to lead his people when they were in greatest need.

Like the Herdwicks of the Lake District, the sheep of Ancient Israel could survive in the arid Mediterranean environment with little water and could be left to fend for themselves rather than being fenced in, so flocks mingled and when it was time to separate them out they knew their own shepherd's voice.

At night, the shepherd herded them into their sheepfold and lay across the entrance; they literally put their bodies between their sheep and danger. Jesus' is the door of the sheepfold. He is the gate.

Day and night, they protected their flock, and so shepherds could not fulfil their religious duties and thus were religious outcasts. So it was a radical, even appalling, idea that shepherds were the first to hear, directly from angels, about the birth of Jesus, the saviour of the world. Everything about that

went against religious propriety.

So shepherds were essential, and yet cast out. They were rugged and tough and yet caring for the most gentle of nature's creatures.

Protecting them, not just from the wild and inhospitable environment, but from thieves and wolves who would devour the sheep and scatter the flock.

How do you protect yourselves and a hundred disparate sheep from a wolf? Armed with nothing more than a stick?

Strength and cunning were probably essential. But also the voice. The call on the wind. The whistle. Every sheep knew their master's voice and would draw close to it however far they had wandered.

When do we hear our master's voice? Are we listening for it when we have wandered far off? In scripture, in prayer, in song, in art, in fellowship and friendship. The voice of our Lord is in all those places (and more) if only we give ourselves time to listen.

And when we hear it, and draw ourselves back to it, our shepherd's voice doesn't just comfort us – it saves our life. It draws us back from the edge, away from danger; it binds us closer together and brings us home.

We are all called to be better shepherds ourselves. God can and will speak through us, and we can be the shepherd's voice to others in our flock. It's a great responsibility. When we find a lost sheep, or when we sense a wolf, are we prepared to raise our voices in the name of God and call out to the one who is lost, the one who is isolated, the one who is afraid?

When we do – God's kingdom comes a little closer. How many

times have I heard wonderful stories of people coming to faith, and they almost always talk about listening when someone spoke to them about God. When someone said a prayer with them, or shared a hymn.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. But we are called to be shepherds too. Tough, resilient, caring, outcast, watchful, vocal, ever present and true. When we find ourselves in moments such as those, we are doing the work of God.

Amen.

Song

**The Lord is my Light,
My light and salvation.
In God I trust.
I trust.**



Prayers of Intercession

Pray for one another – those in our church community

Pray for the Parish, the Island and the World

Pray for the sick, the isolated, the anxious and depressed

Pray for the dying, and those who mourn

Pray for yourselves, and for your own needs

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

The Intercessions may end as follows

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.

Let us pray with confidence, as our Saviour taught us

All Our Father

who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name,

thy kingdom come,

thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our trespasses

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory

For ever and ever. Amen.

The Blessing.

May Christ,
who out of defeat brings new hope and a new future,
fill you with his new life;
and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and
the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always

All **Amen.**

Go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia! Alleluia!

All **Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!**



EASTER