

Reflection for Easter 4, John 10.11–18

This return to the imagery of Jesus as the Good Shepherd may seem a little odd in the Easter season, and after a series of readings concerning Jesus' resurrection appearances. However, within the overall message of St John's Gospel and following the evangelist's imaginative future, it is more explicable.

We might home in on the question of how the sheep can be better off if the shepherd is no longer there; surely the wolf is more likely than ever to attack the sheepfold and slaughter the animals? Here St John's pastoral imagery breaks down if we try to be too limited and literal. Jesus lays down his life voluntarily so as to take it up again in the resurrection, and then after some local and specific instances, disappears from sight at the Ascension – no longer as available to his disciples alone, but much more available for all everywhere. The Spirit of Jesus descending at Pentecost is the Spirit which begins and universalises the Church. The Good Shepherd, then, is not simply attached to or looking after a narrow band of sheep, but concerned with us all. The Salt Lectionary interpretation suggests 'the dynamic of an ever-expanding circle of salvation'.

The reference to 'other sheep' in verse 16 is interesting. It has certainly been used in Christian ecumenical terms to avoid placing other denominations beyond the sheep fold, 'out in the cold' at risk of attack. But could it, should it, also apply to those of other faith and those of no faith who still come under God's loving covenant? The takeaway might certainly be that if we reject others who are not quite like us (either individually or as a Church) we risk rejecting those for whom Jesus is also the shepherd.

Fr David

WARM SPACE ST THOMAS PARISH HALL- THURSDAY 3-5PM



Free refreshments in a warm space

NEXT SUNDAY 28.04.2024 5th Sunday of Easter
10.30am in the Church

READINGS: OT Acts 8: 26-40
NT 1 John 4: 7-21
GOSPEL John 15: 1-8



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St Thomas, Exeter

21st April 2024

Fourth Sunday of Easter

10.30am in Church

Today

10.30am Sung Eucharist & Holy Baptism

Hymn Numbers

77 Christ is our cornerstone

484 The King of love my shepherd is

237 I will sing the wondrous story

Wednesday 24th April

10am Holy Communion (BCP)

2pm Young at Hearts in the Hall

Thursday 25th April

9.30-11am St Thomas Tots

10.30-12 noon Knit & Natter, 19 Maple Rd.

Details from Jenny 01392 498725

3-5pm Warm Space in the Hall

Friday 26th April

9.30am Morning Prayer

10am Staff Meeting

Saturday 27th April

12.30pm Ladies Lunch at the Royal Oak



Collect

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. **Amen**

Acts 4: 5-12

The next day 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.'

1 John 3: 16-24

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.

John 10: 11-18

'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.'

Post 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.

Amen

NOTICES

Community Larder There will be a collection box in the Church on Sundays for food donations. The need remains great so please be mindful of our wider community.

House Group is a small group of people who meet fortnightly to explore various aspects of our faith. It was started by a curate some 30 years ago and many have enjoyed this opportunity. Helen and Ian can give you more details if you are interested.

Parish Website when we reviewed the website to include more details about the bell ringers we noticed that the last Blog entry was in 2022. We are looking for a small team of people who would be prepared to write something occasionally for this Blog. Please speak to one of the staff team.

Electoral Roll It is now time to revise the parish electoral roll ahead of the APCM in May. Please see Carolyn Bryant if you wish to be added to the roll or if you have moved house or changed any other details in the past year. Forms will be available from Carolyn or Ian. If you have any questions please contact Carolyn after the Sunday morning service or call 07780 707183.

The APCM will take place on Sunday 26th May following the Eucharist. We are in need of a Churchwarden and there is one vacancy on the PCC. If anyone is interested in any of these important and interesting roles please speak to Ian or one of the clergy. Nomination forms will be at the back of the Church.

Weekly Pew sheet. If anyone would like to receive the pew sheet by email or be on the pastoral care/contact list, please speak to a member of the clergy or Ian.

