



WELCOME TO ST PETER'S ASH



THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AT ST PETER'S IS CALLED TO CELEBRATE, LIVE AND REFLECT THE LOVE OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST

25th APRIL 2021

EASTER 4

<u>READINGS FOR TODAY</u>	PARISH OFFICE: Please phone or use e-mail to make contact TEL:01252 331161; e- mail: office@saint-peters-ash.org.uk BOOKINGS OF WEDDINGS & BAPTISMS – phone for an appointment on 01252 321517 or 331161 WEBSITE: www.saint-peters-ash.org.uk
Acts 4 v 5 - 12	
1 John 3 v 16 - end	
John 10 v 11 - 18	

ALLELUIA! CHRIST IS RISEN!



Jesus said 'I am the good shepherd'

READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK – EASTER 5

Acts 8 v 26 - end; 1 John 4 v 7 - end; John 15 v 1 - 8

ST PETER'S PRAYER CHAIN - If you would like prayer for yourself or somebody else please phone: 01252 322292 or 01252 323037 This is a confidential service.

If you would like to talk to us at any time please phone us: Carol – 01252 313239. Keith – 01252 321517

Please pray for the souls of all the recently Departed, among them: PRINCE PHILIP; STEVE EVANS; RITA WHERRELL; DOROTHY MILLARD; LIONEL COUSINS

SHOEBOXES FOR CHRISTMAS - I would love it if we could be more 'green' this year. Wooden pencils, wooden handled skipping ropes, wooden yoyo or truck. Cotton facecloth, sisal soap bag, bamboo toothbrush and metal pencil sharpeners are all good. See if you can think of some more. Barbara Rose.

CARE AND SHARE - tins, packets, UHT milk, tea, coffee etc. for the shelves outside church, please leave items on the shelves or on the doorstep of the Rectory.

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

SUNDAY 16TH MAY at 10 – 45 am

IN CHURCH

(Immediately after the 10 am Parish Communion)

Nomination forms are available for churchwardens and 4 places on the PCC. If you are not on the Electoral Roll there are application forms available, once completed please hand them to Fr Keith or Pauline Baxter. Only those on the electoral roll can vote at the meeting.

Quiet Day, led by The Revd. Haydon Wilcox, at St. Columba's House, Woking.

The Quiet Day will support people to get back into the world from lockdown and will offer the opportunity to share, reflect, to be spiritually fed and to gain encouragement.

The event will be from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Numbers will be limited to 16. All Covid protocols will be practised to ensure a safe environment. The cost will be £30 and includes a packed lunch and refreshments.

We anticipate high demand, so two dates have been set aside: Monday 7th June and Monday 12th July 2021. To make a reservation please contact St. Columba's House on Tel. 01483 766 498 or email: admin@stcolumbashouse.org.uk .

Thy Kingdom Come

Thy Kingdom Come (TKC) is a global prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray from Ascension to Pentecost for more people to come to know Jesus. With the Archbishop of Canterbury wanting to focus on evangelism when he visits this diocese 24th - 27th September, we are suggesting that parishes might like to take the TKC initiative for church members to pray for 5 friends from Ascension through to his visit in September.

(From the Diocese)

SOME THOUGHTS FROM FR. KEITH ON TODAY'S READINGS

For a few days last week, the news was dominated by a proposal, by some of the top football clubs, to form a breakaway European Super-league. The reaction was swift and hostile. From Prince William, from the Prime Minister, from former managers and from the fans, there was loud condemnation. Very quickly the plan was ditched, but we wait to see what the fallout will be.

I mention this because of an aspect of that story that I feel resonates with today's Gospel. Part of the condemnation was the accusation that the wealthy owners of the football clubs involved didn't really care about the game, but were only interested in making more money for themselves. Now, to me, that parallels what Jesus was saying about the hired hands in his 'good shepherd' story. Jesus talks about himself as the Good Shepherd who cares for the sheep to the extent that he is prepared to lay down his life for them. In contrast those who are only in it for the money and themselves, don't really care about the sheep and abandon them as soon as danger threatens.

Some people say that commitment and altruism are fast disappearing from modern society. So, have greed and selfishness really become the guiding principles for the majority nowadays? Do people now give up all too quickly on their commitments when the going gets tough, or when a more attractive proposition comes along? If so, what should we be doing about it as Christians?

A recent survey, apparently found that those aged 56 and above were much more likely to do things for others without expecting any personal gain, than those who were younger. Many younger people apparently weigh up what might be in it for themselves, before lending a hand – at least according to this particular survey. Now I suspect that that is a bit of an unfair generalisation, but, nonetheless, it does ring true for some people I've come across in the whole age range.

During Eastertide the readings from the first letter of St John and John's Gospel, challenge us to look again at Jesus' example that he has set for us to follow. Today's reading from I John 3 reminds us that what Jesus did for us was out of a selfless love that, as human beings, we may find hard to comprehend. But the fact is, we *ought* to be emulating Jesus in our commitment to one another and not letting selfish desires get in the way. John asks '*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 to help?*' and He continues, '*Little children let us love. Not in word or speech, but in truth and action*'.

Christianity is a faith where actions should always speak louder than words. Yes, of course there is a place for contemplation, prayer and stillness, but these should always be linked with actions rather than seen as ends in themselves. Moreover, we are called to care for one another in all circumstances, not just when it is easy or when it suits us. People may need us when it is least convenient, often when we've made other plans and are looking forward to doing our own thing. It's at times like this, that Jesus' words about the hired hands, should come back to us, and remind us that we are expected to put self aside out of a genuine love for others and not 'run away'.

Another theme that comes out of the Gospel today is from Jesus' words about the '*other sheep that do not belong to this fold*'. He says '*I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd*'. As followers of Jesus we must never allow ourselves to become inward looking – a kind of cosy club for the faithful only. Our vision must always be a wide one. We are called to care for those on the outside as well as those already within Christ's fold, the Church. Jesus is concerned for the salvation of all people, of all backgrounds and ethnicities, rich and poor, many of whom are not yet convinced of the truth that Jesus came to bring to the world. We should never become complacent or think that our task of mission is completed until all are in the fold with us.

So, we need to keep our commitment to our calling always under review. Are we still seeking out the lost, bringing hope to those in despair, caring for the needy? Are we putting our faith into practice in the way that the Good Shepherd has shown us, with complete commitment?

As restrictions on our lives begin to be lifted, many people will still need our support and the Easter message of joy communicated to them in practical ways. We have all had our priorities challenged over the past year, and perhaps have come to value life itself in new ways. As spring becomes summer and we look forward to new freedoms, let's not forget those whose freedoms will be still be limited by poverty, bad relationships, ill health, depression and much else. Jesus will be looking to us all to reach out to them, perhaps in new ways, using our own experiences during the pandemic to understand where people's real needs lie.

In the words of the hymn 'Lord for the years' that we listened to at the memorial service last Sunday, let us pray that God will help us move forward in a truly Christ-like way:

Lord for ourselves; in living power re-make us - self on the cross and Christ upon the throne, past put behind us, for the future take us: Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

May the Lord Jesus continue to bless and guide us in the many tasks that lie ahead, that we may be like Him, good shepherds working for others, rather than hired hands only working for ourselves. Amen.

"Love always involves responsibility, and love always involves sacrifice. And we do not really love Christ unless we are prepared to face His task and to take up His Cross."
(William Barclay)

"The joyful news that He is risen does not change the contemporary world. Still before us lie work, discipline, sacrifice. But the fact of Easter gives us the spiritual power to do the work, accept the discipline, and make the sacrifice."
(Henry Knox Sherrill)

"Easter says you can put truth in a grave, but it won't stay there."
(Clarence W. Hall)

Morning Prayer at 10 am on Sunday

(A recording of this service is available to view now on the St Peter's website.)

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

If there is more than one person present, someone may wish to read the parts marked (L), everyone says the rest together. You can say alternate verses in the Psalm and in the Canticles. Please have a Bible to hand.

(L) Alleluia, Christ is risen!
All: He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

(L) O Lord, open our lips
All: and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

(L) In your resurrection, O Christ,
All: let heaven and earth rejoice. Alleluia.

A candle may be lit

- 1 Christ our passover has been sacrificed for us: ♦
so let us celebrate the feast,
- 2 not with the old leaven of corruption and wickedness: ♦
but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.
- 3 Christ once raised from the dead dies no more: ♦
death has no more dominion over him.
- 4 In dying he died to sin once for all: ♦
in living he lives to God.
- 5 See yourselves therefore as dead to sin: ♦
and alive to God in Jesus Christ our Lord.
- 6 Christ has been raised from the dead: ♦
the first fruits of those who sleep.
- 7 For as by man came death: ♦
by man has come also the resurrection of the dead;
- 8 for as in Adam all die: ♦
even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

All Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

This hymn is said or sung:

Loving Shepherd of thy sheep,
keep us all, in safety keep;
nothing can thy power withstand,
none can pluck us from thy hand.

Loving Saviour, thou didst give
thine own life that we might live,
and the hands outstretched to bless
Bear the cruel nails impress.

We would praise thee every day,
gladly all thy will obey,
like thy blessed ones above
happy in thy precious love.

Loving Shepherd, ever near,
teach us all thy voice to hear,
suffer not our steps to stray
from the straight and narrow way.

Where thou leadest we would go,
walking in thy steps below,
till before our Father's throne
we shall know as we are known.

(L) The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind:

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever. Amen.

(L) Christ our passover lamb has been sacrificed for us. Let us therefore rejoice by putting away all malice and evil and confessing our sins with a sincere and true heart.

Pause to call to mind our sins and then we confess them:

Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord,
we come to you in sorrow for our sins,
and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.
We have lived by our own strength,
and not by the power of your resurrection.
We have lived by the light of our own eyes,
as faithless and not believing.
We have lived for this world alone,
and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us.
Lord, hear us and help us.

(L) God of love and power we ask you to forgive us and free us from our sins,
heal and strengthen us by your Spirit,
and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. Amen.

The collect for Easter 4:

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.

Read Acts 4 v 5 - 12 then Psalm 23 concluding with:

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

Read 1 John 3 v 16 - end

(L) Alleluia, alleluia. I am the first and the last, says the Lord, and the living one; I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore.

All: Alleluia.

Now read John 10 v 11 - 18

Fr Keith has written some thoughts for today – see above, before the start of this service.

Now pause for your own reflections.

(L) Let us affirm our faith:

All: We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came

down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

All Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. Alleluia.
He has defeated the powers of death. Alleluia.
Jesus turns our sorrow into dancing. Alleluia.
He has the words of eternal life. Alleluia.

We now say 'The Benedictus' together:

All: The Lord is risen from the tomb
who for our sakes hung upon the tree. Alleluia.

- 1 Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, ♦
who has come to his people and set them free.
- 2 He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, ♦
born of the house of his servant David.
- 3 Through his holy prophets God promised of old ♦
to save us from our enemies,
from the hands of all that hate us,
- 4 To show mercy to our ancestors, ♦
and to remember his holy covenant.
- 5 This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
- 6 Free to worship him without fear, ♦
holy and righteous in his sight
all the days of our life.
- 7 And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the
Most High, ♦
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
- 8 To give his people knowledge of salvation ♦
by the forgiveness of all their sins.
- 9 In the tender compassion of our God ♦
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
- 10 To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the
shadow of death, ♦
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

All Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

All: The Lord is risen from the tomb
who for our sakes hung upon the tree. Alleluia.

Prayers of intercession now follow

We pray to Jesus who is present with us to eternity.

Jesus, light of the world,
bring the light and peace of your gospel to the nations,
use us in your service we pray, give us courage to speak
out in the cause of what is right, and in our actions to
witness to your love:

Jesus, Lord of life - in your mercy, hear us.

Jesus, bread of life, give food to the hungry, and nourish
us all with your word. Bless those who are operating
foodbanks and delivering food parcels to the needy. Be
with all who are working for fairer trade, and helping
people to be more self-sufficient and sustainable in their
farming methods around the world.

Jesus, Lord of life - in your mercy, hear us.

Jesus, our way, our truth, our life,
be with us and all who follow you in the way. Deepen our
appreciation of your truth and fill us with your life. Help
us to listen more carefully to your word and be more
prepared to put self aside for the sake of the needs of
others.

Jesus, Lord of life - in your mercy, hear us.

Jesus, Good Shepherd who gave your life for the sheep,
recover the straggler, bind up the injured, strengthen the
sick and lead the healthy and strong to new pastures.

Jesus, Lord of life - in your mercy, hear us.

Jesus, the resurrection and the life,
we give you thanks for all who have lived and believed in
you especially those who have died recently – PRINCE
PHILIP, STEVE EVANS; RITA WHERRELL; DOROTHY
MILLARD; LIONEL COUSINS Be with their families and
friends and all who mourn, give them comfort in their time
of sorrow and loss.

Jesus, Lord of life - in your mercy, hear us.

May our prayers be joined to those of Mary, Peter and all
the saints, as we commend ourselves and each other to
your unfailing love saying:

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of
your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

As Jesus taught us, so we pray: Our Father in heaven....

The following hymn may be said or sung:

Christ the Lord is risen again,
Christ hath broken every chain.
Hark, angelic voices cry,
singing evermore on high,
Alleluia.

He who gave for us his life,
who for us endured the strife,
is our paschal Lamb today;
we too sing for joy, and say
Alleluia.

He who bore all pain and loss
comfortless upon the cross,
lives in glory now on high,
pleads for us, and hears our cry:
Alleluia.

He whose path no records tell,
who descended into hell,
who the strong man armed hath bound,
now in highest heaven is crowned.
Alleluia.

He who slumbered in the grave
is exalted now to save;
now through Christendom it rings
that the Lamb is King of kings.
Alleluia.

Now he bids us tell abroad
how the lost may be restored,
how the penitent forgiven
how we too may enter heaven.
Alleluia.

Thou, our paschal Lamb indeed,
Christ, thy ransomed people feed;
take our sins and guilt away:
let us sing by night and day
Alleluia.

Let us pray:

(L) 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. Amen.

(L) 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.

(L) May the God of peace,
who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,
that great shepherd of the sheep,
through the blood of the eternal covenant,
make us perfect in every good work to do his will,
working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight;
and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all today
and always. Amen.

(L) May the risen Christ grant us the joys of eternal life.
All Amen.

(L) Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia, alleluia.
All Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.

All May the souls of the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God rest in peace, and rise with Christ in glory.
Amen.

EVENING PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

O God, make speed to save us.
O Lord, make haste to help us.

In your resurrection, O Christ,
let heaven and earth rejoice. Alleluia.

All Splendour and majesty are yours, O God;
you are exalted as head over all.

- 1 Blessed are you, God of Israel, for ever and ever, ♦
for yours is the greatness, the power,
the glory, the splendour and the majesty.
- 2 Everything in heaven and on earth is yours; ♦
yours is the kingdom, O Lord,
and you are exalted as head over all.
- 3 Riches and honour come from you ♦
and you rule over all.
- 4 In your hand are power and might; ♦
yours it is to give power and strength to all.
- 5 And now we give you thanks, our God, ♦
and praise your glorious name.
- 6 For all things come from you, ♦
and of your own have we given you.

All Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

All Splendour and majesty are yours, O God;
you are exalted as head over all.

This hymn may be said or sung

Faithful Shepherd, feed me
in the pastures green;
Faithful Shepherd, lead me
where thy steps are seen.

Hold me fast, and guide me
in the narrow way;
so, with thee beside me,
I shall never stray.

Daily bring me nearer
to the heavenly shore;
may thy love grow dearer,
may I love thee more.

Hallow every pleasure,
sanctify my pain;
be thyself my treasure,
though none else I gain.

Give me joy or sadness,
this be all my care,
that eternal gladness
I with thee may share.

Day by day prepare me
as thou seest best,
then let angels bear me
to thy promised rest.

That this evening may be holy, good and peaceful,
let us pray with one heart and mind:

As our evening prayer rises before you, O God,
so may your mercy come down upon us
to cleanse our hearts
and set us free to sing your praise
now and for ever. Amen.

*A Psalm is said: Mon (St Mark) 45; Tue 116; Wed 47;
Thurs 85; Fri 36; Sat (Philip and James) 149 ending with:*

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever.
Amen.

Two Scripture Readings now follow (see below). Between the two readings we say:

All By the river stood the tree of life,
with healing for all the nations.

- 1 I saw no temple in the city, ♦
for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty
and the Lamb.
- 2 And the city has no need of sun or moon
to shine upon it, ♦
for the glory of God is its light,
and its lamp is the Lamb.
- 3 By its light the nations shall walk, ♦
and the rulers of the earth
shall bring their glory into it.
- 4 Its gates shall never be shut by day,
nor shall there be any night; ♦
they shall bring into it
the glory and honour of the nations.
- 5 I saw the river of the water of life,
bright as crystal, ♦
flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.
- 6 And either side of the river stood the tree of life,
yielding its fruit each month, ♦
and the leaves of the tree
were for the healing of the nations.
- 7 The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be there,
and his servants shall worship him; ♦
and they shall see his face
and his name shall be on their foreheads.

All To the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb ♦
be blessing and honour and glory and might,
for ever and ever. Amen.

All By the river stood the tree of life,
with healing for all the nations.

Readings:

Monday Ezekiel 1 v 4 - 14; 2 Timothy 1 v 4 - 14
Tuesday Exodus 32 v 15 - 34; Luke 3 v 1 - 14
Wednesday Exodus 33; Luke 3 v 15 - 22
Thursday: Exodus 34 v 1 - 10, 27 - end; Luke 4 v 1 - 13
Friday Exodus 35 v 20 to 36 v 7; Luke 4 v 14 - 30
Saturday: Job 23 v 1 - 12; John 1 v 43 - end

After the second reading we say:

The Lord is my strength and my song:
he has become my salvation.

I shall not die, but live,
and declare the works of the Lord.

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.
The Lord is my strength and my song:
he has become my salvation.

Gospel Cantic: The Magnificat (The Song of Mary)

All The stone which the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone. Alleluia.

1) My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit
rejoices in God my Saviour; he has looked with favour on
his lowly servant.

2) From this day all generations will call me blessed; the
Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his
name.

3) He has mercy on those who fear him, from generation
to generation.

4) He has shown strength with his arm and has scattered
the proud in their conceit.

5) Casting down the mighty from their thrones and lifting
up the lowly.

6) He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the
rich away empty.

7) He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, to
remember his promise of mercy.

8) The promise made to our ancestors, to Abraham and
his children for ever.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever.
Amen.

All The stone which the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone. Alleluia.

*Prayers of thanksgiving are made for the day that is
ending. Intercessions are offered for the church, the world
and for individuals, the sick and the departed.*

Our Father, who art in heaven ...

This hymn may be said or sung:

The strife is o'er, the battle done,
the Victor's triumph won;
O let the song of praise be sung:
Alleluia!

The powers of death have done their worst,
and Jesus hath his foes dispersed:
let shout of holy joy outburst.
Alleluia!

On the third morn he rose again
Glorious in majesty to reign;
O let us swell the joyful strain:
Alleluia!

Lord! by the stripes which wounded thee,
from death's dread sting thy servants free,
that we may live and sing to thee.
Alleluia!

Let us pray:

(L) 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. Amen.

(L) 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.

Lighten our darkness, Lord, we pray, and in your great
mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night,
for the love of your only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

All: 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.

Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia! Alleluia!
Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia! Amen.

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

Peter Harwood, Director of Mission at the Diocese, shares a sermon on the Good Shepherd based on John 10: 11-18.

Introduction:

After the resurrection, everything changed, because one man died a very public humiliating death on the cross, but rose again. Dead men don't rise from the dead. No-one rises from the dead (this wasn't a resuscitation – this was resurrection). It was only normal to ask the question – who is he? What is he, who can do this? Who is this man?

The disciples after the resurrection started to reflect on everything that Jesus had said of himself during his lifetime. And so we, two weeks after Easter are doing the same in our reading today. We turn to one of the great "I am" sayings in John's gospel. "I am the Good Shepherd". There are seven "I am's", what marks the "I am the Good Shepherd" out is that all the others are impersonal - "I am the bread of life", "I am the light of the world", "I am the resurrection"

Jesus is not only tell us about who he is, He is also giving us a wonderful insight into how he feels about us and why he does it. This is remarkable!

Three things.

1. He knows you v 14 "I know my sheep and my sheep know me". Shepherds know every one of their sheep.

A preacher who had been a shepherd tells the story of being on a train with another shepherd. A few weeks before the train journey the friend had been to market and had sold his lambs. As they were pulling out of a station, they passed a field with a flock of sheep and the shepherd friend commented "Look, there are four of my lambs in there!"

What does he know? Just as shepherds know sheep are vulnerable sheep in need of protection. He knows our knows our humanness – that we are very mixed up. He knows us by name and our individual quirks. He sees past the bits we like people to see. He sees the bits we hide, the shameful bits, our failures, our selfish motives, our insecurities and our fears. He sees beyond the image, into our very being.

He says "I know you....". And of course, my fear is that when someone really knows me, they won't like what they see and will reject me.

2. He will die for you.

This is all the more remarkable given the fact that he knows us so very well! Our response might well be: "Seriously, you would die for me! Even when you know what I am really like! Yes!

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 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. 13 The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.

In this is, a profound Easter message. That little word 'for' – in the Greek means "in the place of". 2 He is saying "I love my sheep so much that when the wolves come, I become like a lamb for them to kill, in the stead of you - I become the sacrificial lamb".

He is effectively saying "I would lose anything rather than see my sheep die. I would rather lose my life, I would lose even my glory, rather than see my sheep perish."

Comparing us with sheep, isn't very complimentary – they are defenceless, stupid and needy. That is precisely the point – that despite our vulnerability, that despite our selfishness and independence yet, he prizes us so much, that he would give up everything and die in our place.

There is no greater affirmation of your worth than this. Jesus looks at your past & seeing everything, even the hidden stuff. He looks at your future – and the mistakes and wrongs you are yet to make, and he looks into your heart, all the way to the bottom.

Jesus is saying "I see you as so infinitely precious, that I would rather give up my life than see you die".

When someone really knows you, yet accepts you and wants to stick with you, such that they will sacrifice all sorts of things for you, only then do you know that you are ok, that you are likeable and loveable.

3. He calls you by name

It's very easy to assume that he calls you by the name your parents gave you. But again and again, God gives people a different name to the one their parents gave me. Think of Abram becoming Abraham or Simon becoming Peter and numerous others.

Something very rich to ponder on – it speaks of your uniqueness; it speaks of your significance. There could be something quite fun to guess, think, explore what heavenly name you think he has given you.

But the point of new names in scripture is that they describe something about the person and their purpose. They in some way draw you to think about your mission. Simon was named Peter because he was going to become a rock. Abraham – because he was going to become the father of multitudes.

To each of you, he has a mission – a calling on your life. He has a purpose for you. To start with, it is a calling to be where you are. You are called to the neighbourhood you live in. You are called to your work place. You are called to your school. You are called to your college. To your family.

Where-ever you are – God has called you – to do the work that he has prepared in advance for you to do.

Conclusion

This is the question – The Good Shepherd is calling you by name. Will you follow him? He knows you – the real you. He would give up anything for you and has done so. He has a purpose for your life.

If you have said yes, before – good time to confirm the yes.
If you have never said yes before – maybe ready to say yes.
I am going to say a prayer – you may like to echo it in your heart.

Lord Jesus, thank you that you know me better than I know myself and yet consider I am worth sacrificing your life for me. Thank you that you have a purpose for my life and that you are calling me to follow you as my good shepherd. I choose to follow you – I turn from all other paths, and trust you to lead me through life. In Jesus name. Amen.
