



St Peter's Wolvercote & All Saints Wytham Fourth Sunday of Easter 3 May 2020

Alleluia. Christ is risen!

Dear Friends

As we continue through the Easter season, this fourth Sunday focuses on the Risen Lord as the Good Shepherd. Our psalm this Sunday is Psalm 23 – “The Lord is my Shepherd”. In late March, as the pandemic was starting to bite in this country, Bishop Steven encouraged us to read the psalm every day at 11:00am.

In my talk today, we'll look at how the image of shepherd applies to the crucified and risen Jesus, who is “The Shepherd and Guardian of our souls”.

With love and prayer.

Charles

Holy Communion in the Easter Season

Hymn: The King of love my shepherd is

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

1 The King of love my shepherd is,
whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his,
and he is mine for ever.

2 Where streams of living water flow,
my ransomed soul he leadeth,
and where the verdant pastures grow,
with food celestial feedeth.

3 Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
but yet in love He sought me,
and on his shoulder gently laid,

Follow our worship on YouTube

<https://youtu.be/FQRGzqmEVMw>

The Lord be with you

All and also with you

Alleluia. Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord,
we come to you in sorrow for our sins,
and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

and home, rejoicing, brought me.

4 In death's dark vale I fear no ill
with thee, dear Lord, beside me;
thy rod and staff my comfort still,
thy cross before to guide me.

5 Thou spread'st a table in my sight;
thy unction grace bestoweth;
and O what transport of delight
from thy pure chalice floweth!

6 And so through all the length of days
thy goodness faileth never:
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
within thy house for ever.

We have lived by our own strength,
and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us.

All Lord, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes,
as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us.

All Lord, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone,
and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us.

All Lord, hear us and help us.

May the God of love and power
forgive *you* and free *you* from *your* sins,
heal and strengthen *you* by his Spirit,
and raise *you* to new life in Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Collect

Let us pray

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.

Readings

Acts 2.42-47

Many were baptized and were added to the
community. ⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles'
teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and
the prayers.

⁴³Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders
and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All who
believed were together and had all things in common;
⁴⁵they would sell their possessions and goods and
distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Day by
day, as they spent much time together in the temple,
they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad
and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having the
goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord
added to their number those who were being saved.

For the gift of the Word

Thanks be to God.

Hymn: The Lord's my shepherd (<https://youtu.be/giswY8j-tk8>)

1 The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want;
he makes me down to lie
in pastures green; he leadeth me
the quiet waters by.

2 My soul he doth restore again,
and me to walk doth make
within the paths of righteousness,
e'en for his own name's sake.

3 Yea, though I walk through death's dark vale,
yet will I fear none ill,

for thou art with me; and thy rod
and staff me comfort still.

4 My table thou hast furnished
in presence of my foes;
my head thou dost with oil anoint,
and my cup overflows.

5 Goodness and mercy all my life
shall surely follow me;
and in God's house forevermore
my dwelling place shall be.

1 Peter 2.19-25

Brothers and sisters: ¹⁹It is a credit to you if, being
aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly.

²⁰If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong,
where is the credit in that? But if you endure when you
do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. ²¹For
to this you have been called, because Christ also
suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you
should follow in his steps. ²²He committed no sin,
and no deceit was found in his mouth. ²³When he was
abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he
did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one
who judges justly. ²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body
on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for
righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

²⁵For you were going astray like sheep, but now you
have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your
souls.

For the gift of the Word

Thanks be to God.

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.

Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John 10.1-11

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to the Pharisees: ¹Very 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. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers. ⁶Jesus used this figure

of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. ⁷So again Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. ¹¹I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Talk – Revd Charles Draper reflects on Jesus as shepherd and guardian of our souls – watch on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/DyBg32QIKVs>)

In the last couple of weeks, we have had a little encouragement in the hope that the peak of the coronavirus crisis in the UK appears to have passed. And the Spring flowers have blossomed, and as we have moved from the solemnity of Holy Week to the joy of Easter, so our hearts have been lifted. And yet this week we have been facing more sombre news that it has actually been worse than we have realized, and that the effects of it will be with us for a long time. And there is a growing concern that in the poorer parts of the world, the worst of this crisis is yet to come.

As we continue this new month to explore the Easter themes, we are reminded that Easter has a seriousness of its own. As we move into the second half of the Easter season, we move from enjoying the Easter stories to thinking about what the message of Easter means. And we start to remember that Easter is about much more than Easter eggs and Easter flowers. Easter gives us a powerful message of hope, which can make us more able to face the hard things in life, and to face them positively and unafraid.

Last week, as we focused on the journey of the two disciples to Emmaus, we thought about our own journey through social distancing, and for some of us self-isolation, and about how the risen Jesus meets with us where we are and walks beside us on our journey.

This week we have moved into a darker part of the journey, as we have thought more of those who are in the midst of the struggle with the coronavirus. On Tuesday this week we kept a minute's silence to remember those NHS staff and care workers who have given their lives in caring for those with the coronavirus. And we have thought of and prayed for their families, alongside so many others who have lost loved ones. Alongside them, we remember others who have been

bereaved, whether or not from the virus, who are having to attend funerals with just a handful of family with them, facing their grief but without the softening effects of the support of family and friends, and without the comfort of sharing together with each other their stories and their memories of their loved ones.

So what do our readings for this Sunday have to say to us in all of these circumstances? And how can we pray for those who are in the midst of this struggle?

At the beginning of the shutdown, Bishop Steven shared with us his reflections on Psalm 23, which is the psalm set for today. "The Lord is my shepherd" is with good reason the most popular psalm of all. Those words could have been written for our current crisis.

*"Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me; your rod and your staff—
they comfort me"*

It is a beautiful psalm – do read it again this Sunday – with words of gentle but strong reassurance. In Isaiah 40 v 11 (not in our readings today), the prophet picks up the image of shepherd in a different way:

*"He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them close to his heart,
and will gently lead the mother sheep."*

This is about the shepherd's care for the vulnerable. Therese of Lisieux, the young Carmelite nun in the nineteenth century who died of tuberculosis when she was twenty-four, loved these words. She found here reassurance that we do not have to struggle to climb up into God's presence, but that God lifts us up in his arms, and carries us close to his heart. Powerful words for those who are ill or depressed or feeling weak and vulnerable.

So in the Old Testament we find warm and powerful imagery of God our Shepherd who lovingly carries us through the dark times of life. Our New Testament readings for this Sunday – the fourth Sunday in Easter – proclaim that through his death and resurrection, Jesus has become for us our Good Shepherd, who can lead us safely not only through the hard times of life, but even through death itself, and into the life to come.

The end of our epistle describes Jesus as “the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls.” The word “guardian” means one who watches over us. But the writer is very clear. He is able to be our Shepherd who watches over us because he himself has suffered for us: *“When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten...”*

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross...”

“... by his wounds you have been healed.”

Because he suffered himself he is able to be “the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls” - both because he is himself familiar with suffering, and because through his resurrection from the dead, he has overcome death, and can lead us safely to eternal life. Our gospel reading today comes from the beginning of John chapter 10. But before we look at this, I want to refer to another couple of verses later in the same chapter:

Jesus said: *“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.”*
(John 10v27-28)

Here are words worth remembering, and worth spending time on, in reflection and meditation. *“I know them”* – the living, risen Jesus knows us each one of us, personally and individually. He understands our foibles and our weaknesses and accepts us with them. He understands our fears and our anxieties. He understands the places where we are vulnerable.

As St Matthew’s Gospel says of Jesus, quoting from Isaiah 42 v 3:

“He will not break a bruised reed or quench a smouldering wick...” (Matthew 12 v 20)
“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.”

Here we find not only Jesus’s promise that he will share with us his resurrection life, but also the promise of ultimate security – that we are eternally secure in him. As St Paul puts it:

“I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8 v 38)

So in these words, St Paul too is affirming that Jesus is “the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls.” Our Gospel

reading today, slightly confusingly describes Jesus in three different ways, as the “gate keeper” who “calls the sheep by name and leads them out”, as the “gate for the sheep”, and as “the good shepherd”. It is a slightly confusing picture – Jesus as the leader who shows the way, Jesus as the way itself – the gateway into life – and Jesus as the shepherd who cares for us on the way. The point of course is that Jesus is all of these things for us! A little bit like the famous verse “I am the way, the truth and the life”. Jesus is all these things – he is at the same time our journey, our destination, and the one who leads us and cares for us on the way. How is he able to be all of this for us? We come back to the same answer:

“The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

Jesus is able to be our good shepherd, through life, through death, and into eternal life, because he is the shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep, and now is risen and alive and with us always. One part of the Easter stories I find especially moving is the realisation that the risen Jesus still bears the scars of crucifixion. He is the crucified and risen Jesus, and he will bear those scars forever. This is why, above all, we know we can trust him. That is why he can say:

“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.”

We know his voice – the voice of one who has suffered himself, the voice of one who laid down his life for us, the voice of one who still bears those scars and will for all eternity. So we trust him. And so when he calls us, we are ready to follow. And in him we are secure, The one who gave himself in love for us, the one in whom we trust, is also the one who has conquered death, and has authority over death, and who has the power to lead us safely through that gateway to eternal life.

He is our good shepherd, who walks with us through the dark times of life. He is our strong shepherd who lifts us and carries us on his shoulders when we have no strength of our own. And he is our eternal, life giving shepherd, who came to give us life – abundant life – life to the full – both now and for all eternity.

Perhaps when we pray for those who are in the midst of the struggle with the coronavirus, we might pray that they may have some sense, some glimpse, some reassurance, that in the risen living Jesus, we have a Shepherd and a Guardian for our souls.

Amen

The Intercessions - prepared this week by Phillippa Hardman

As we enter another week of sharing our worship from our homes, we rejoice in the revelation of the risen Lord and give thanks for the gift of the Word.

During this week, we commemorate the English Saints and Martyrs of the Reformation Era, giving thanks for their faithfulness and self-sacrifice, and also for the religious freedom and co-operation that we now enjoy in this nation. We remember Julian of Norwich (1342-c.1417), whose spiritual writings continue to inspire Christians today; we follow her in trusting that through God's love and compassion for His creatures, 'all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well'.

Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us**

We give thanks and pray for the peace and unity of the Church throughout the world, and pray especially for fellow-Christians facing hostility and persecution. We pray for our Taung Link and the whole diocese of Kimberly and Kuruman. We pray for the work of Christian Aid and other organizations working overseas. In our diocese, we pray for Bishop Steven and all who work for our Cathedral, many now working from their own homes; for University and School Chaplains, and for Hospital Chaplains at this especially difficult time, and for local Religious Communities. We pray for the clergy of our parishes of Wolvercote and Wytham, and for all those helping to support us as we worship at home.

Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us**

We give thanks for our local community, with its opportunities for friendship and service, praying for neighbours who live or work in Cutteslowe Park, Millars Acre, Talbot Road, Marriott Close, Foxton Close, Elsfield Way. We pray for all who worship in our Parish but who live outside it. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us**

Locally we pray for the Wolvercote Community Market; our work in the Cutteslowe Area, praying especially for all who would be leading or attending a service in the Cutteslowe Pavilion today; Cutteslowe Community Centre, and all local hospitals, clinics and surgeries. We give thanks for the continuing work of local people supporting our homeless neighbours and those who lack food security, and we pray for the Gatehouse and the Oxford Community Emergency Foodbank. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us**

Internationally we pray for all countries afflicted by Covid-19, especially those where conflict, poverty and natural disasters add to their suffering. We pray for all in authority, throughout the world, trying to deal with the enormous challenges posed by the new virus. We pray also for victims of state-sponsored violence or terrorist activity, for refugees and asylum-seekers, and all those working to support them. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us**

In our country, we continue to pray for the Prime Minister and the government, and their scientific advisers, as they try to manage the effects of the pandemic. We pray for all research workers attempting to find treatments and vaccines for the virus, especially the teams here in Oxford and the volunteers undertaking trials. We give thanks and pray for all working in the NHS, in care homes and hospices, and in support roles of every kind. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us**

We give thanks for God's creation and our environment, recognizing it as a source of consolation and hope for many at this time. *"O glorious God, the whole of creation proclaims your marvellous work: increase in us a capacity to wonder and delight in it, that heaven's praise may echo in our hearts and our lives be spent as good stewards of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord."* Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us**

We pray for all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit, especially those feeling the effects of loneliness and anxiety in these times of isolation. Amongst those who have asked for our prayers, we remember Margaret Williams, Jenny Gerrard, Trixie Collier, Ray Voss, Marion Boulton, Vicki Shepstone, John Waugh, Margaret Ewert, Lyn Dean, Gordon Killie and his wife, Jane, and children Charlie and Isabella. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us**

We remember with thanksgiving those who have died recently, including Tim Bravington, Leonard Trafford, and all those who have died during this pandemic, and we pray for their families and friends. Amongst those who died about this time in earlier years we remember Roma Bryant, Sheila Honisberg, Kenneth Venney, Mary Young, Joanne Grant, Barbara Smith, Jill Halls. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us**

Merciful Father, 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.

The peace of the risen Christ be always with you

All and also with you.

The Lord is here.

All His Spirit is with us.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

Almighty God, good Father to us all,
your face is turned towards your world.

In love you gave us Jesus your Son

to rescue us from sin and death.

Your Word goes out to call us home to the city where
angels sing your praise.

We join with them in heaven's song:

Holy, holy, holy Lord,

God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Father of all, we give you thanks for every gift that
comes from heaven.

To the darkness Jesus came as your light.

With signs of faith and words of hope

he touched untouchables with love and washed the
guilty clean.

This is his story.

This is our song:

Hosanna in the highest.

The crowds came out to see your Son, yet at the end
they turned on him.

On the night he was betrayed

he came to table with his friends to celebrate the
freedom of your people.

This is his story.

This is our song:

Hosanna in the highest.

Jesus blessed you, Father, for the food;
he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and said:

This is my body, given for you all.

Jesus then gave thanks for the wine;

he took the cup, gave it and said:

This is my blood, shed for you all for the forgiveness of
sins.

Do this in remembrance of me.

This is our story.

This is our song:

Hosanna in the highest.

Therefore, Father, with this bread and this cup
we celebrate the cross

on which he died to set us free.

Defying death he rose again

and is alive with you to plead for us and all the world.

This is our story.

This is our song:

Hosanna in the highest.

Send your Spirit on us now

that by these gifts we may feed on Christ with opened
eyes and hearts on fire.

May we and all who share this food

offer ourselves to live for you

and be welcomed at your feast in heaven where all

creation worships you,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

Blessing and honour and glory and power

be yours for ever and ever. Amen.

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

All 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.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours

now and for ever. Amen.

Alleluia. Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.

All Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.

We invite you to join in at home with this prayer:
Lord Jesus Christ, since I cannot at this time receive communion, I pray you to come into my heart. I unite myself with you and embrace you with all my heart, my soul, and my mind. Let nothing separate me from you; let me serve you in this life until, by your grace, I come to your glorious kingdom and unending peace. Amen.

Post Communion Prayer
Let us pray
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.

Hymn: [Thine for ever God of love](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vx_JK9FrTIM)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vx_JK9FrTIM

1 Thine for ever! God of love,
hear us from thy throne above;
thine for ever may we be
here and in eternity.

2 Thine for ever! Lord of life,
shield us through our earthly strife;
thou the Life, the Truth, the Way,
guide us to the realms of day.

3 Thine for ever! O how blest
they who find in thee their rest!
Saviour, guardian, heavenly friend,
O defend us to the end.

4 Thine for ever! Shepherd, keep
us thy frail and trembling sheep;
safe alone beneath thy care,
let us all thy goodness share.

5 Thine for ever! Thou our guide,
all our wants by thee supplied,
all our sins by thee forgiven,
lead us, Lord, from earth to heaven.

The Blessing

God the Father,
by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead,
strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life;
And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

The Dismissal Go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia, alleluia!
Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia!

Diocese of Oxford Church at Home

Watch online or dial in.

Bishop Colin presides at the Diocese of Oxford's Church at Home service this Sunday at 10am. The order of service is [available here](#) and the viewing link is emailed to all subscribers each Sunday morning. Parishioners unable to access the internet can dial 01865 920930 to hear the service (press 0= short service, 1= full service). Normal call rates apply.

UK Prays

Bishop Olivia will be among the contributors this Sunday for an inclusive unifying moment of prayer for humanity. This online event is open to all and takes place at 13:00-13:30 GMT.

Details here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdozSCNgK4M&feature=youtu.be>



Christian Aid Week 10-16 May

Christian Aid Week each year is the single most important fund-raiser for the work of Christian Aid throughout the world. Many activities are usually involved, not only house-to-house collections but also many other group events like special services, quizzes, coffee mornings, Big Brekkies, shared lunches, etc. None of these usual activities is possible this year, a **major emergency** for Christian Aid.

As COVID-19 spreads across the world, love rises up in response. You've already shown incredible kindness to your neighbours. Now is the time to reach out to your neighbours both near and far.

Your love protects. From storms, from drought, and now from coronavirus. Your love protects our global neighbours battling the spread of this illness. Your love protects. With soap, clean water and medical supplies.

By supporting Christian Aid Week, this year online, you can reach out and protect more of your neighbours today.

Please donate now and save lives

If you don't have access to the internet you can donate by telephone at 020 7523 2269.

Thank you!