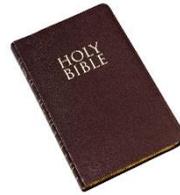




EASTER 4 – SUNDAY 25th APRIL 2021

Here below we have an outline of our service for you to follow at home if you can't be with us. Choose a quiet reflective space and to make it more meaningful have a cross, bible and candle to make your sacred space.



INTRODUCTION

Good morning everyone, we hope that you have had a good week, more and more things are now opening and we are being able to meet people again so I hope you are feeling more confident even though we still have to be careful.

The team is organising a Christian Aid walk and major fundraiser on the 10th of July, we are hoping to walk to all the team churches starting at St. Peter's Belmont and finishing at St. Anne's at Turton, you can walk all of it or some of it and maps are able to be viewed at church and I am sure they will be on the team website soon. If you want more information or an entry form then you can get one from your church or your representative ours it Dot Mitchell. If you can't walk then perhaps you could sponsor someone and that way we can help and support desperate people in other countries. I hope that the sunshine has been booked for that day and we have a great walk, we also need help with refreshments etc. at each of the churches. A reminder our APCM is on Tuesday the 18th May but will have to be on zoom, please consider joining our PCC and let us know if you would like to join us in making decisions about our church.

Today's reflection is by Rev Robin and the intercessions by Mike Haslam, many thanks to them.

Jan B.

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

Almighty God to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.



PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Almighty God our heavenly Father we have sinned against you and against our neighbour in thought word and deed, through negligence, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault. We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ who died for us, forgive us all

that is past and grant that we may serve you in newness of life to the glory of your name. Amen

GLORIA



Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly king, almighty God and Father. We worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. Lord Jesus Christ only son of the Father Lord God Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: have mercy upon us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One , you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

THE COLLECT

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.

THE NEW TESTAMENT READING

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."

This is the word of the Lord – **Thanks be to God.**

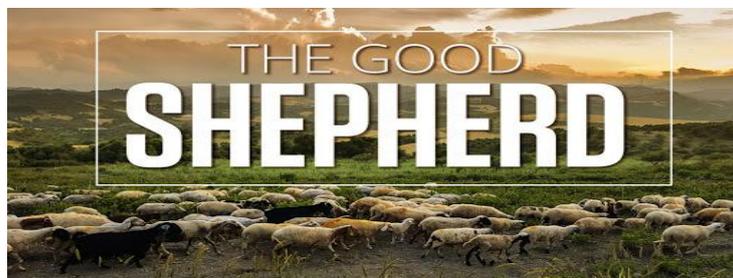
THE GOSPEL

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, Alleluia.**

Hear the Gospel of our lord Jesus Christ, according to John - **Glory to you O, Lord**
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."

This is the Gospel of the Lord – **Praise to you O Christ.**



REFLECTION

Today is often called 'Good Shepherd' Sunday — but I want to focus more on the Wolf in today's gospel reading! Notice that the wolf does not come to steal, kill, or destroy the sheep (as the thief does - you will have to look back to verse 10 for that part of the passage). The wolf's task is to snatch and to scatter!

Death is not the real enemy! Thieves and bandits are not the real enemy! The world, with its structures and systems, may claim that to steal and to kill and to destroy is power – but real evil knows better.

Our real enemy is not a cartoon caricature of evil (the 'thieves and bandits') but the wolf, and more particularly, the wolf who comes in sheep's clothing, the 'bad' masquerading as the 'good'.

And our main battleground, as Christians, is not so much that of 'right' versus 'wrong' – 'good' versus 'evil'; our battleground is more that of the 'right' versus the 'almost right', or the 'partly right', or the 'nearly right'.

Daily decisions, personal and political, are rarely black and white. More usually they are different shades of grey (but not necessarily 40!), and are open to discussion and interpretation.

It is within those shades of grey that the (grey) wolf comes: to snatch and to scatter us, to confuse and divide, to destroy our internal integrity and solidarity, to bend the truth, to distort what is right or acceptable.

But Jesus saves us from the wolf – he is the good shepherd.

The New Testament image of the good shepherd draws upon a passage from the prophet Ezekiel in the Old Testament (Ez.34.16):

"I will search for the lost, recover the straggler, bandage the hurt, strengthen the sick, leave the healthy and strong to play, and give them their proper food."

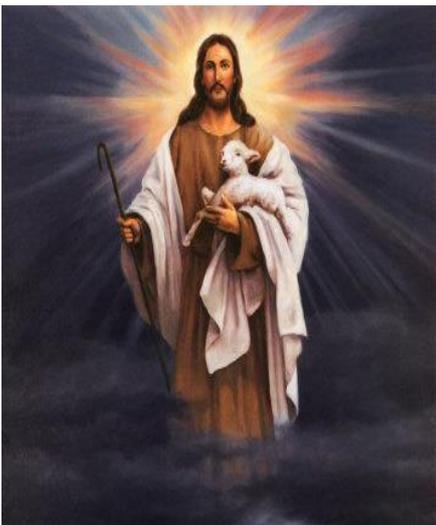
It is almost self-evident that this is the right thing to do. But there are some who would condemn the lost rather than search for them, who would leave the straggler in faith behind, who would almost gloat over hurt rather than bandage it – hiring shepherds that all too often fall short!

But Jesus says

"I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. And I lay down my life for the sheep." Alleluia!

Revd Robin Usher

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH



I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again; ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

INTERCESSIONS

During the intercessions, we pray for the church, our country, our government, people in difficulty and those who have died. You can use your own prayers or if you *prefer here are some on today's theme.*



Holy God, your Son remained with his disciples for 40 days after his resurrection, teaching them to love all people as friends and neighbours. We too are his disciples and we offer our prayers on behalf of the church, the world in which we live and all those with whom we share it.

Loving God, the letter of John reminds us that "If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?" Help us as in our parish to try to aspire to love with actions and truth and not merely with words or speech.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Loving God we pray for all world leaders that, using Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd as the ultimate model of leadership, they would lead and care for their own flocks in such a way that peace might abound, righteousness flourish and injustice be eradicated.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Father God, help us to reach out to strangers in our midst. As we remember the way the early Church lived in one heart and mind and shared everything they had may we too in this parish be always mindful of the needs of others less fortunate and always welcome the newcomer joyfully into our midst.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Loving God, we pray for those who do not know your peace and for those who are struggling with their lives. We ask for your healing on those who are sick, your strength for those who are tired and your love for those who live with despair and fear.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

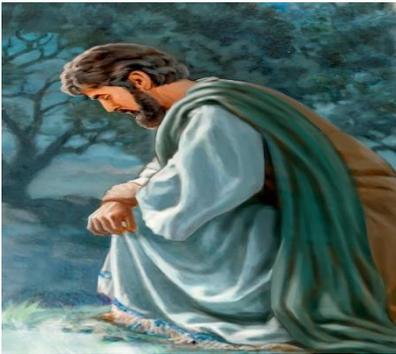
Gracious God, we pray for those who now walk in the valley of the shadow of death. We know from the Psalm that you are with them and have gone before them to prepare table overflowing with all good things. Guide those who are left behind in the paths of righteousness and uphold them in their sorrow with the assurance of your goodness and love. Especially today we remember Elizabeth Gourlay and from

our book of remembrance Arthur Bernarr Lloyd, Joyce Dickenson, Elizabeth (Lizzie) Ormerod, Annie Entwistle, Ernest Arthur Kilner and Joseph Greenhalgh.
Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Everlasting God, we ask that you would bless us here at St Maxentius with vision for the future and reverence for the past. Guide us each day as we minister to one another and to the world. Help us each day to bear witness to your name and to do your bidding, always mindful of your amazing love for us.

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

THE LORD'S PRAYER



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 forever. Amen.

THE BLESSING

May Christ's holy, healing, enabling spirit be with us and guide us on our way at every change and turn, and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with us now and forever more. **Amen**

