

Dear Friends

I hope this weekly email with worship and reflections for today finds you well. It's just the reflection that I've done on video this time, but the words of prayers and readings are printed below and also as Word attachments. I've also included a link to a setting of 'The King of Love my Shepherd Is' - a rather different version of the hymn than we're used to, but rather lovely I think - many thanks to Sarah for having found and shared this. As previously, I have not included the names of individuals on the prayers of intercession so that we can share the prayers widely - but do please hold in your prayers all you know who are ill, and as we remember those who have died we remember Linda Kirby and Joan Collier, in addition of course to those whose funerals have already taken place.

I do have some very good news to share. It was announced this week that the full-time Area Dean of the new Deanery of Coleshill and Polesworth is to be Revd Louise Shaw. Many of you will already know Louise, as she is Vicar of Dosthill and was Area Dean of Polesworth until the deaneries were combined. The new role is very different, as she will be freed of particular parish responsibilities in order to support and strengthen the work of churches right across the Deanery. I know Louise very well as a friend and colleague, and am absolutely delighted that she has been appointed to this post. Please pray for her, and also for the parish of Dosthill who have been so blessed by her ministry there.

Do get in touch with any news you may have to share, and free to share these prayers and the reflection with anyone who may find them helpful.

With love and blessings

John

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAHspeN2ME4&feature=youtu.be>



### The Good Shepherd: A Reflection for the Fourth Sunday of Easter - YouTube

A reflection by Revd John on Jesus as the Good Shepherd, based on the readings for the fourth Sunday of Easter, Acts 2.42-47 and John 10.1-10.

[www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

**He is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Almighty God,  
your Son has opened for us a new and living way into your presence.  
Give us new hearts and constant wills  
to worship you in spirit and in truth  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

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 pure heart.

**Lord our God,  
in our sin we have avoided your call.  
Our love for you is like a morning cloud,  
like the dew that goes away early.  
Have mercy on us;  
deliver us from judgement;  
bind up our wounds and revive us;  
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

May the God of love  
bring us back to himself,  
forgive us our sins,  
and assure us of his eternal love  
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

#### **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.**

#### **New Testament Reading: Acts 2.42-47**

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all as any had need. Day 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, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

#### **Gospel Reading: John 10.1-10**

Jesus said, "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."

### **Reflection: Revd John**

I wonder what is the first picture that comes into your mind when you're asked to think of Jesus as being "the Good Shepherd"? I suspect for many of us it's the classic image, found in old Sunday School books and Victorian paintings, of the man with long hair and a beard and a shepherd's crook, and, draped across his shoulders, a pretty hefty-looking lamb that he is carrying gently but firmly back home. It's an image that derives less from what the Gospels say directly about Jesus than from a story that Jesus himself told. I'm sure we know the one. A shepherd counts his flock of a hundred sheep, finds that one is missing, and, leaving the ninety-nine, heads out in search of the stray, and the shepherd does not give up until he finds the sheep that was lost, and returns with it to the fold. Alongside the parables of the lost coin and the prodigal son, the parable of the lost sheep is a story that tells of the love of God, in which every individual matters, including, perhaps especially, the ones we might think of as excluded or lost. Jesus the Good Shepherd is the one who gathers us in, and brings us safely into the fold. As we sing in "The King of love my shepherd is", that wonderful version of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, *"Perverse and foolish oft I strayed, but yet in love he sought me, and on his shoulder gently laid, and home, rejoicing, brought me."*

But vital as that truth is, there is another dimension to the idea of Jesus as Good Shepherd that today's reading from John's Gospel shows us. I was struck by what is in some ways a peculiar phrase in verse 9, where Jesus says, "I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture." It's that second part that we can easily miss: "come in and go out". It's all too easy to think of the work of the good shepherd as just being about bringing the scattered sheep safely into the pen. But no. The sheep are to come in and go out and find pasture. The sheep fold is only a temporary measure. If they stay cooped up in that small space for any length of time, there will be no grass left there for them to feed on. The shepherd's task is to lead the sheep into the rich open pastures in which they can be nourished and thrive. As we hear earlier in the Gospel reading, "The sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out." Out. Not in. The good shepherd doesn't just bring back the sheep that have strayed, but sends out and leads out the flock that was gathered.

And I think that tells us something important, not only about Jesus the Good Shepherd, but also about us, the people of his pasture, the church. 'Ecclesia', the Greek word that is translated as "church", literally means 'assembly' or 'gathering'. It suggests that it is when and as we gather

and meet together that we become church. The first reading, from the Book of Acts, gives a glowing, perhaps rather idealised picture of the church in its earliest days, where we are told that the first followers of Jesus “spent much time together in the temple”, as they devoted themselves to a community life of prayer and worship, of teaching and mutual service.

Being together, learning together, praying together; these things matter. But we are living through times in which we cannot gather together in that way. And so it may be especially important to remember that other side of the truth, that the Good Shepherd does not just gather us in, but also leads us out. The Church is the church, the people of God, whether we are assembled or dispersed, whether we are together in the fold, or whether we are spread across the fields and the hillsides. Indeed, in the words of that setting of Psalm 23, whether we be by the “streams of living water”, or in the “verdant pastures”, or even when we find ourselves “in death’s dark vale”, Jesus the Good Shepherd is always with us, will care for us and will ultimately bring us home.

### **Prayers of intercession**

Jesus, Good Shepherd and King of Love,  
give grace to us, the people of your pasture,  
as we come before you now with our prayers  
for our country and for our world,  
for our church, for our communities,  
for those who suffer and for those who mourn  
and for ourselves and all in need.

May we know your presence with us  
whether we travel through sunlit pastures  
or through the dark valley of shadows;  
and bring us safely to our journey’s end.

Lord, in your mercy:

**hear our prayer.**

Jesus, Good Shepherd and King of Love,  
look in mercy upon a troubled world;  
and especially as we work to contain and overcome the spread of the coronavirus.  
Be with those who are on the forefront of that work:  
with doctors, nurses, cleaners and careworkers,  
with those engaged in research for vaccines and treatments,  
and with all key workers and especially those who are placed at risk on a daily basis.  
Give to all the protection and resources that they need,  
and grant that we may support them,  
not only in what we say, but what we do.

Lord, in your mercy:

**hear our prayer.**

Jesus, Good Shepherd and King of Love,

give grace to all who are in positions of leadership and authority;  
May their exercise of power be shaped by your example,  
of compassion and humility, wisdom and strength.

We pray for leaders of the nations,  
including Her Majesty the Queen, the Prime Minister and government;  
and we pray for leaders of the Church;  
for Archbishops Justin and John,  
for Bishops David and Anne,  
for Louise, as she prepares to take on the role of full-time Area Dean,  
and for those of all denominations who exercise ministry in your name.  
Lord, in your mercy:

**hear our prayer.**

Jesus, Good Shepherd and King of Love;  
we pray for our local communities, and especially this week for all who live  
in the Laurels and Trinity Road in Kingsbury, Wakefield Close in Hurley,  
Wood Street in Wood End and Atherstone Lane in Baxterley.  
We pray for those who live alone, and for those who live in a difficult or dangerous situation.  
May all people know your love that transcends all barriers,  
and enable us all to hear your voice calling us to follow you.

Lord, in your mercy:

**hear our prayer.**

Jesus, Good Shepherd and King of Love;  
we pray for all who are sick and in need of healing;  
we bring before you those who are particularly on our hearts and minds;  
pour out your grace upon them, ease their pain, assure them of your love, and bring them to the  
wholeness of life that is your will.

Lord, in your mercy:

**hear our prayer.**

Jesus, Good Shepherd and King of Love;  
you are with us throughout our journey of life  
and you lead us safely through to the life that is to come.  
We hold before you those whose earthly life is over;  
help us to entrust them into your loving care,  
and bring your comfort and hope to all who walk through death's dark vale.

Lord, in your mercy:

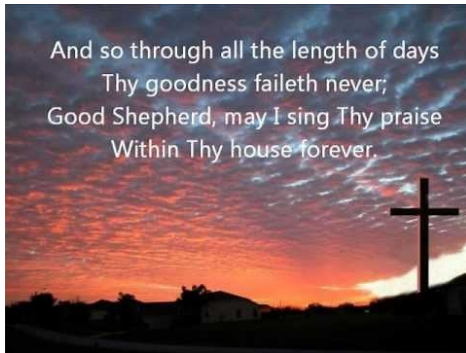
**hear our prayer.**

### **Blessing**

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 you perfect in every good work to do his will,  
working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight;  
and the blessing of God Almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit  
be with you all, now and always  
**Amen.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3GFVW6m9Qo>



And so through all the length of days  
Thy goodness faileth never;  
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise  
Within Thy house forever.

The King Of Love My  
Shepherd Is - Maranatha  
Celtic  
[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

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