

Hailsham Methodist Church
Worship at Home
Sunday 25th April 2021

Opening Prayer

Lord God, wherever we may be we approach you now as your people and the sheep of your pasture. We enter your gates with thanksgiving and your courts with praise, for your steadfast love endures forever. Amen

Hymn: All For Jesus – All for Jesus (StF 341)

Prayers of Adoration & Confession

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for the message of Easter – for the assurance it brings of your triumph over death, the proof it offers that love will always have the last word.

Yet alongside that message there is another that perhaps we do not hear so often – a challenge which sometimes we can ignore, a call to action as well as to celebration.

You have given us good news; **teach us to share it.**

Lord Jesus Christ, you appeared to your followers, demonstrating you had risen, and then you sent them out to proclaim your resurrection to all.

You met with them, and then called them to lead others to you.

You gave them joy, and then told them to share it.

Easter was not for the few but for all, not just for them but the whole world!

You have given us good news; **teach us to share it.**

Lord Jesus Christ, forgive us that so often we forget that.

Having experienced your risen presence, we keep it to ourselves.

Having met with you, we fail to introduce others to you in turn.

Having received so much, we have shared so little.

You have given us good news; **teach us to share it.**

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for those who have fulfilled your call – those who first made the Gospel known to us, those who proclaim it to others, those who sow, nurture, and bring to fruition the seeds of faith.

We pray for all you have specially gifted to proclaim the Good news – preachers and evangelists, ministers and missionaries, teachers and writers.

May many meet with you through their labours and come to know you as their God.

You have given us good news; **teach us to share it.**

Lord Jesus Christ, you call each one of us to be your witnesses – to tell others what we have experienced of your love, to make known what you have done for us, to testify to the way you have changed our lives.

Help us to do that faithfully, to play our part in your kingdom and purpose.

And so through us may others come to meet you and know you for themselves.

You have given us good news; **teach us to share it, to your glory.**

Amen.

New Testament Readings: 1 John 3:16-25, Acts 4:5-12

Hymn: Father, Hear The Prayer We Offer (StF 518)

Gospel Reading: John 10:11-18

Reflection:

Sheep are often underestimated! At first sight they may appear a bit stupid, following each other about and not really looking out for themselves. But if you find out more about them, or maybe talk to an experienced shepherd, you will quickly realise that there's more to sheep than meets the eye. They are all individuals. So the notion of a relationship between a shepherd and some sheep is more profound than it might seem at first sight.

In Jesus' time, sheep were usually not fenced into fields, but went around in small flocks, accompanied by their shepherd. It was the shepherd's task to lead the flock to places where they could find good grazing, and water to drink, and protect them from hazards.

So the relationship between the shepherd and his flock was very significant - a flock of sheep was a valuable asset and thus a big responsibility. As Jesus explains here, the good shepherd might even need to give up his life for his sheep, if, for example, the flock was attacked by wild animals. And he goes on to explain the difference between a shepherd who owns his flock and so takes an 'owners' interest in them - versus the hired worker 'just doing the job'.

So Jesus presents this image of the shepherd and his sheep to help his audience understand the kind of relationship he has with his followers. It's a powerful story, looking forwards to Jesus giving up his life for the sake of his flock.

To Ponder: What does the image of Jesus as 'shepherd' mean for you?

Sheep in a flock are individuals who interact with each other. How do you relate to the notion of being one of Jesus' flock?

How does the concept of a shepherd prepared to give up his life for his sheep help you to understand Jesus' crucifixion?

Hymn: I Cannot Tell Why He, Whom Angels Worship (StF 350)

Prayers of Intercession

Loving God, we thank you for the gift of Easter, a day that changed the way we think, we act and the way we live; a day that changed everything.

Lord of life, **hear our prayer**

And so we pray now for change in our world, for change in all those places where there is human need.

We pray for victims of war, of repressive regimes, for refugees, for divided communities and countries.

We pray for the oppressed, the persecuted, the imprisoned and the exploited.

Lord of life, **hear our prayer**

We pray for the poor, the homeless, the sick and the hungry.

We pray for those who are bereaved, the fearful, the troubled in heart and mind.

Lord of life, **hear our prayer**

Loving God, may the truth of Easter break into each and every one of these situations, bringing help and healing, strength and support, comfort and courage, hope and help, faith and freedom, love and life, the change that you alone can bring.

Lord of life, **hear our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

We pray together as Jesus taught us: Our Father

Hymn: I Will Sing The Wondrous Story (StF 323)

Blessing:

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep, make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

*Reflection by Rev Peter Byass, taken from 'A Word In Time', Methodist Church website
Prayers of Adoration, Confession and Intercession compiled by Rev Barbara Evans-Routley*