



Worship at Home
an order of Morning
Prayer for the
4th Sunday of Easter
25th April 2021

WE PREPARE

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:

**He has given us new life and hope
by raising Jesus from the dead.**

Lord, speak to us

that we may hear your word.

Move among us

that we may behold your glory.

Receive our prayers

that we may learn to trust you.

HYMN

Lord my God! when I in awesome wonder
consider all the works Thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
the power throughout the universe displayed;

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee,
how great Thou art, how great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee,
how great Thou art, how great Thou art!*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
and hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze;
Then sings my soul . . .

And when I think that God His Son not sparing,
sent Him to die – I scarce can take it in,
that on the cross my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin:
Then sings my soul . . .

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
and take me home – what joy shall fill my heart!
Then shall I bow in humble adoration
and there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!
Then sings my soul . . .

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

We say, 'Sorry'...

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.

In your mercy, forgive us.

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.

Lord, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone,
and doubted our home in heaven.

In your mercy, forgive us.

Lord, hear us and help us.

... and receive God's loving forgiveness...

May the Father of all mercies
cleanse us from our sins,
and restore us in his image
to the praise and glory of his name
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**



HYMN

Lord Jesus Christ, You have come to us,
You are one with us, Mary's son;
cleansing our souls from all their sin,
pouring Your love and goodness in:
Jesus, our love for You we sing – living Lord!

Lord Jesus Christ, now and every day
teach us how to pray, Son of God;
You have commanded us to do
this in remembrance, Lord, of You:
into our lives Your power breaks through – living Lord!

Lord Jesus Christ, You have come to us,
born as one of us, Mary's son;
led out to die on Calvary,
risen from death to set us free:
living Lord Jesus, help us see You are Lord!

Lord Jesus Christ, I would come to You,
live my life for You, Son of God;
all Your commands I know are true,
Your many gifts will make me new:
into my life Your power breaks through – living Lord!

The night has passed and the day lies open before us;
let us pray with one heart and mind.

[pause]

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 forever. **Amen.**

A collect for today...

O God of peace, whose Son Jesus Christ,
was brought back from the dead
to be the great Shepherd,
grant that we may be led by him
out of darkness and death
into the fullness of life eternal;
through the same Christ, our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
in all eternity. **Amen.**

And as our Good Shepherd taught us,
so we pray... **Our Father...**

GOD'S WORD

Acts 4; 5-12

The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. ⁶ Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. ⁷ They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹ If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, ¹⁰ then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹ Jesus is

"the stone you builders rejected,
which has become the cornerstone.'^[a]

¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."



Psalm 23 **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.

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.

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.

My table Thou hast furnishèd
in presence of my foes;
my head Thou dost with oil anoint,
and my cup overflows.

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

Gospel John 10; 11 – 18

[Jesus said...] ¹¹“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.



¹⁴“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—
¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. ¹⁷The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He has given us new life and hope.

He has raised Jesus from the dead.

God has claimed us as his own.

He has brought us out of darkness.

He has made us light to the world.

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Reflection...

Over and over again, through stories and teaching, Jesus speaks of himself as the *Good Shepherd*. And if Jesus is the shepherd, those for whom he cares must be the sheep; and we, as Christians, are sheep whose fold is the Church of believers.

Jesus speaks of sheep and the shepherd, for they were a familiar sight in the villages, the people would have understood and related to these images of everyday life.

“My sheep listen to my voice,” says Jesus, “I know them and they follow me,”; that special relationship of knowing and being known.

But, has shepherding changed since the time of Jesus?

Surely the flock's basic need of someone to give them pasture, water, health checks, and to keep them safe, hasn't changed over the centuries.

Whether in times past or times present, the sheep draw life from the shepherd's provision. They thrive under the resources of the farm and the expertise of the shepherd whose voice they know. They even recognise the sound of the vehicle bringing their food - now that *is* new! Carefully watched and protected from danger, the sheep flourish, they are the shepherd's life. Jesus makes it clear that this is the relationship he wants with each one of us.

He knows what is best for us; he provides for us; he calls each one of us by name. Jesus knows us, every nook and cranny of us. And he is the only one who can find us and take us home when we are lost;

for it is Jesus who takes us in his arms,
arms that were outstretched for us on the cross,
and it is Jesus who restores us to God, our heavenly Father.

There is nowhere we can go, nothing we can do that will put us outside the range of the Shepherd's search;

but God gives us free-will to choose whether or not we go with the Shepherd. Jesus doesn't force us to do anything.

But listen to what Jesus says next. "The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So, when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away."

A real shepherd is born to his task. He is sent out with the flock as soon as he is old enough to go.

The sheep become his friends and his companions; and it becomes second nature to think of them before he thinks of himself.

Does that ring any bells?

In contrast, the hired hand came into the job, not as a calling, but as a means of making money.

He was in it solely for profit, having no sense of the responsibility of his task. When trouble came, he was off, abandoning the sheep.

We can differentiate between the true shepherd and the false one, by what they do. The false shepherd puts himself first, saving his prospects at the cost of his reputation. The true shepherd, however, shows who he is by being prepared to die for his sheep. And when we were in danger of being eternally separated from God, *that's what Jesus did*; he took upon himself the fate that should have been ours.

The lambs and sheep in *our* villages need continuous provision to satisfy their hunger and thirst, constant care and protection to keep them safe and well; for without these, they will not flourish. Jesus makes it clear that our own relationship with him is the same.

As we journey through and out of the pandemic, we do so following Jesus, for we have not lost our Good Shepherd. With our eyes fixed on Jesus, and listening for his guiding voice, we shall be safe in his care.

Jesus still leads those who will follow him. We don't have to make this pandemic journey in our own strength - in fact if we try to do things on our own we will only struggle and fail.

The security of our folds, providing us with places for fellowship and worship, enable us to respond to Jesus' voice as, daily, he calls us to come out from the fold, to lead us to the pastures around us, the places where he wants us to be.

If we don't leave the fold and walk with Jesus in our daily lives, we, like the sheep, will not receive all we need from the Good Shepherd.

Of the two words John could have used for 'good', he chose the one that can also mean 'beautiful'. John writes of the attractiveness of what Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is doing, for when he calls, people want to come to him, drawn by his loveliness. Only then will we take seriously what he says and what he does, accepting him as our Shepherd, committing ourselves to following him.

When Jesus says, "I know my sheep and they know me," he speaks to each one of his flock, with great affection; and we, in reply, can say,

"He is in my life; I am his.

"He knows me; I know him.

"He is mine; I am his."

Many shy away from such an intimate association.

We are not at all sure we wish to be so completely committed.

There is much at stake!

Jesus comes to us. He calls us. He invites us to turn to him.

He offers to take us under his care.

He longs to lead us in his ways.

He desires to share life with us.

He wants us to enter fully into the joys of belonging to him.

He delights to give us all the joys and blessings of life with him.

He will lead us.

In short, Jesus wants to be in our lives, and for us to be in his.

We have free-will.

In our journey of life, through it and out the other side,
will you choose to follow Jesus the Good Shepherd?
And only him?

We respond...

Let us declare our faith

in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ died for our sins

in accordance with the Scriptures;

he was buried;

he was raised to life on the third day

in accordance with the Scriptures;

afterwards he appeared to his followers,

and to all the apostles:

this we have received,

and this we believe. Amen.

HYMN

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,
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 PRAY TOGETHER

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...

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.

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

Jesus, our way, our truth, our life,
be with us and all who follow in the way...

Deepen our appreciation of your truth
and fill us with your life.

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..

Raise us with them to eternal life.

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

accept our prayers and be with us always. Amen.

OUR SERVICE DRAWS TO A CLOSE

HYMN

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.

He makes me lie in pastures green.

He leads me by the still, still waters,

His goodness restores my soul.

And I will trust in You alone,

and I will trust in You alone,

for Your endless mercy follows me,

Your goodness will lead me home.

He guides my ways in righteousness,

and He anoints my head with oil,

and my cup, it overflows with joy,

I feast on His pure delights.

And I will trust . . .

And though I walk the darkest path,

I will not fear the evil one,

for You are with me, and Your rod and staff

are the comfort I need to know.

And I will trust . . .

We go back into the world

to walk in God's light,

to rejoice in God's love

and to reflect God's Glory. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

*Material for this service is drawn from:
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Service compiled and reflection written by Sue Wilcox