

SERVICE NOTES 25TH APRIL 2021

Lectionary passages:-

Acts 4 v5-12 ;

Psalm 23;

I John 3 v16-24;

John 10 v11-18

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. Noting the 23rd Psalm at the top of this page probably gave you an idea where we are going today. In John 10, Jesus tells us he is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life to protect the sheep. He stands in the entrance to the pen as it were or takes a dangerous road to protect his sheep to the extent he will even die for his sheep.

We get a picture of such a life when David is going against the giant Goliath. He is given Saul's armour and decided he cannot move well in it. He takes it off and puts on his shepherd's tunic, he picks up his sling and five small pebbles. The soldiers tell him he will not survive and taunt him. But David points out when he works as a shepherd he has to protect his sheep from lions and bears.

David has often put his life on the line. This is no different to that. David risks his life for the nation as he moved towards Goliath, and as King a few years later he does the similar, he is a model leader, not enjoying the trappings of office but cares for and gives himself to his people, we need more leaders like that!

Jesus is the perfect example the shepherd who takes on the enemy (of sin and death) so his sheep (you, me and the whole human race) may live. The hired hand does not have the lives of the sheep on his heart but turns and runs at early signs of danger.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd and he knows his sheep. I am always amazed when I see a programme based in the countryside, a shepherd or a dairy farmer has a large flock or herd yet he or she knows the name of each of the animals, knowing their temperaments, which ones kick! And aware of their needs and failures, Jesus is that caring Shepherd.

Jesus gives his life for his sheep, freely. It is not a dreadful accident that takes the life of Jesus away nor is it a sad set of circumstances that brings Jesus to the cross but a voluntary action on the part of Jesus when he freely goes to his death, an innocent man paying the price for our sin.

Jesus also makes the point here that he has other sheep, reminding us we are part of a big flock.

Jesus was speaking to the Jews, reminding them they were not the only ones God loves and to prepare the way for a Gentile church as well as a Jewish one. We

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perhaps could say the same when it comes to the varying forms of worship in different churches or the different denominations that make up the church of God worldwide (there are over 2500 denominations listed!)

Jesus is the Good Shepherd, he has many sheep. He loves each one dearly, we read the shepherd who had 100 sheep but goes to look for the one missing rather than be satisfied with the 99.

So we know the extent of his love and care. We know we are all important to him and must love one another because he loves us all. There is no favouritism or pecking order with God. His care is for each of us, a care that cost Jesus all he was and is, when he was here on earth and continues such a ministry in his church in these last days, through people like you and me!

We are all called to share in that work as his under shepherds, a high calling indeed as we will lay down our lives for our friends.