

18th July 2021 6 pm Evening Teaching: Like Sheep Without a Shepherd

Service led by Andrew Haines, Talk by Christine Haines.

Reading by Felicity Hawke.

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Greeting

[Andrew:] Well, good evening and welcome to our time of worship here at St John's in Kenilworth. Our service begins on page 10 in the green service books.

The light and peace of Jesus Christ be with you

All and also with you.

The glory of the Lord has risen upon us.

All Let us rejoice and sing God's praise for ever.

The minister may say:

We have come together in the name of Christ
to offer our praise and thanksgiving,
to hear and receive God's holy word,
to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins,
that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Hymn: All People That On Earth Do Dwell

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|---|--|
| 1. All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice:
Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell,
Come ye before Him and rejoice. | 3. O enter then His gates with praise,
Approach with joy His courts unto;
Praise, laud, and bless His Name always,
For it is seemly so to do. |
| 2. The Lord, ye know, is God indeed:
Without our aid He did us make:
We are His folk, He doth us feed,
And for His sheep he doth us take. | 4. For why? the Lord our God is good,
His mercy is for ever sure;
His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure. |

Confession

Return now for a moment of penitence.

Jesus says, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' So let us turn away from our sin and turn to Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

All Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy
forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly,
love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God.
Amen.

Absolution

May the God of love and power
forgive *you* and free *you* from *your* sins,
heal and strengthen *you* by his Spirit,
and raise *you* to new life in Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Prayer of thanksgiving

Blessed are you, sovereign God,
our light and our salvation;
to you be glory and praise for ever.
You led your people to freedom
by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.
May we who walk in the light of your presence
acclaim your Christ, rising victorious,
as he banishes all darkness from our hearts and minds.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

All Blessed be God for ever.

Opening prayer

The day is almost over, and the evening has come;
let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

As our evening prayer rises before you, O God,
so may your Spirit come down upon us
to set us free to sing your praise
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

Reading: Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

And we remain seated for our reading.

[Felicity:]

Jesus feeds the five thousand

30 The apostles gathered round Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. 31 Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’

32 So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. 33 But many who saw them leaving recognised them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. 34 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

53 When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. 54 As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognised Jesus. 55 They ran throughout that whole region and carried those who were ill on mats to wherever they heard he was. 56 And wherever he went – into villages, towns or countryside – they placed those who were ill in the market-places. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

This is the word of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

The Magnificat

Before Chris comes to speak to us, let's say the Magnificat together. If I say the first part of each verse and then you respond with me in the second part, and we'll join in the Gloria at the end.

- 1 My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour; ♦
he has looked with favour on his lowly servant.
- 2 From this day all generations will call me blessed; ♦
the Almighty has done great things for me
and holy is his name.
- 3 He has mercy on those who fear him, ♦
from generation to generation.
- 4 He has shown strength with his arm ♦
and has scattered the proud in their conceit,
- 5 Casting down the mighty from their thrones ♦
and lifting up the lowly.
- 6 He has filled the hungry with good things ♦
and sent the rich away empty.
- 7 He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, ♦
to remember his promise of mercy,
- 8 The promise made to our ancestors, ♦
to Abraham and his children for ever.

Luke 1.46–55

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

Sermon

[Christine:]

Wouldn't it be nice to lose these masks? Let's pray together.

Father, in the heat and stillness of this evening we come to You. We pray that You will calm our minds, settle our spirits. And would You speak to us, Lord, Your words of life. In Jesus' name.

Amen.

So we come to this Bible reading for this evening. But I just want us to go back slightly to the bit that we haven't read, so I'm just going to remind you that at the beginning of the sixth chapter, Jesus sent the disciples out. They had been with Him for a little while, there were 12 of them. They had watched Him. They'd listen to Him. They'd heard His preaching of the Kingdom of God. And they'd seen miracles, they'd seen miracles of nature, Jesus walking on the water, I think, by then, and they had seen healing miracles, too. And now Jesus has sent them out, and He sent them out in pairs to go, and to do the work that He had been doing. He gave them His authority to go out to preach, to heal, and to drive out demons, and so they've been sent off on their travels. And now, at the beginning of chapter six, they've all come back again, and they've got lots of stories to tell. And no doubt, there would have been the excitement in the coming together to hear each other's stories as well as to tell Jesus just what had been happening to them.

When I was teaching, the children used to go off on work experience in year 10. And we used to prepare them for their work experience, we used to say the obvious things, "When you go out, dress nicely, be a credit to the school, speak nicely," and all the other bits of information that we had to give them. And then they would come back two weeks later, and the classroom would be abuzz because there was so much chatter, and there was so much to say. And I imagine it would be something of that sort of scene that Jesus is welcoming them back to.

And in the meantime, in another little bit that, you know, seems a bit of an offshoot at the moment (but we may come back to it later), we've read the story of the beheading of John the Baptist. Now maybe those disciples were aware of that. Maybe they've heard about it, maybe not. Mark's gospel puts it in order before the bringing back together of Jesus and the disciples. So, we don't know how much they knew at that stage.

But they came back to Jesus, and they were excited. They had had lots of experiences, and lots of chatter. And Jesus realised that they were excited, He realised that they were tired, and He met their needs, and He decided that they would get on the boat, and they would go off to some peace and quiet. And that's what He intended to do. And that's a good sort of biblical principle isn't it? We work hard, and then we rest, and that's what Jesus was going to be doing with the disciples. But plans went haywire, as they often do, and the people around and about could see which direction that little boat was travelling in, and they were going to get round the boat, round to the shore, to meet the boat, because they didn't want to let Jesus go, they'd been following Him. And they were a large crowd, we're told, that run round that shore to meet the boat. Jesus and the disciples didn't have very long to have the quiet time together. They had a bit of time. And when they got to the shore, Jesus got out of the boat, and He saw this crowd. And what did He say? He said that they were like sheep without a shepherd, and we're told that He had compassion upon them. The word used for compassion meant a huge, um, inner being that was reaching out, it wasn't just a sort of feeling sorry for them, maybe it was hot like today, not just feeling sorry, but a heart-wrenching, aching pain of compassion for the people.

And so He wanted to help them, and they were obviously getting hungry, they'd been there for a little while. No doubt the disciples were hungry too. And so Jesus wanted to feed them. And so, the people were getting hungry, it was obviously getting late. The disciples said, "What are we going to do? We need to feed these people." And the answer was, "You give them something to eat." Now they'd been away from Jesus, they'd been doing the same work as Jesus, under His authority. And so now, maybe He was testing them a little bit further: "You go and give them something to eat." And their response was "Too expensive to feed all these people, just send them away. Yes, let's let them go home. They can come back another time. We can't cope with this. Off they go." And that's not the answer of a shepherd. These people are without a shepherd in Jesus' eyes. And He has an answer for them. He is the answer: the shepherd.

The shepherd of Middle East was a little bit different from the shepherd today. Now I realise that I've reached a certain age, because I quite enjoy watching *Countryfile*. I would never have watched *Countryfile* 20, 30, 40 years ago, but now I do. And I like watching Adam Henson. And what I see are not necessarily Adam Henson, but shepherds in general today, is that the love and the care and the protection for the shepherds is there, but they get driven out to the fields. And then, once they're in the fields, at the beginning of the summer or spring, they seem to stay there until much later in the day when they're brought back, probably for lambing.

The Middle Eastern Shepherd was very different. He would go out and he would lead the sheep, he would go in front of them, and he still does. And if you go out to Israel or Jordan now, you will see little flocks, and they're always led by the shepherd, they're never driven by the shepherd behind them. And the shepherd would stay with them all day. Back in Jesus' day there would have been quite a lot of sheep around, because many sheep were needed for sacrificial purposes in the temple, so there wouldn't have been tiny flocks, there would have been a lot of sheep around. But by the end of the day, the shepherd would call his sheep, and the sheep would recognise his voice, and they would come away from the rest of the flock, and they would find their shepherd and he would take them back to the fold that night. The fold would have been probably a walled enclosure or a confined space, they would have been put into that space and he would have guarded them, ready for the next day when they would have gone out again. That would have been the pattern for the Middle Eastern shepherd, and it still is.

And Jesus is seeing people without a shepherd. He's seeing people running to and fro, running perhaps after anybody who gave words that they wanted to hear. And don't we see that today? We see people running around sometimes, not quite knowing where to go, who to listen to. There are many voices. If you go into a garden centre these days, you will see not many, but several, figures of Buddha. And lots of people have figures of Buddha in their garden, in their house, Christians too. What are we doing? What are we saying? Do we need Buddha to give peace in our garden, when we have the Holy Spirit, who brings peace? But it's a voice that sometimes people want to hear. There are secular voices that people want to hear, because they're, they're not challenging, or maybe some people would disagree with that. They're comforting.

We have a different voice, we have the voice of Jesus that we can give. These people were running around, and they were lost. What was going on? I sometimes, often, worry. And I worry very much about the state of our church in our day. And I worry particularly after some of the comments that are around this month, round and about General Synod. I worry that we are becoming lost and scattered sheep, and that as I look to the future that's the pattern I see. I don't see the strength of a national church, but I see lots of people running in lots of directions. And that worries me. You may have different ideas, that's my thought at the moment. And when I read today, a comment, which is actually Justin Welby, and it could be misquoted, but this is what I read today, saying "We don't preach morality, we plant churches. We don't preach therapeutic care, we plant churches." The idea is to plant 10,000 churches in the next 10 years. It's a

good, and it's a noble thing to aim for and I'm not against that at all. How are we going to do that? How are we going to do that to ensure that therapeutic care, as it's called, is still covered? Yes, we need to spread the Word; yes, we need to bring people into the Kingdom of God; yes, we need to tell them about Jesus: all of those things. But we need to care for people.

The pattern of Jesus was to preach, was to tell the people about God, God's love for them, about the Kingdom of God, to bring them into that Kingdom. But then He cared about them, and He protected them, as He cared and protected the sheep. He saw Himself as the Good Shepherd; and John's gospel, of course, He gives us that statement, "I am the good shepherd." He was well aware of the biblical pattern in the past. He knew the psalm, 23rd psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd," and He applied that to Himself. So when He saw these people running around without a shepherd, He knew that He was that Shepherd, that they were looking for. And so He reached out to care for them. And the first thing He did was to provide the food. They were hungry. The disciples couldn't meet that need - were challenged to - didn't meet the challenge. And so, Jesus, then, of course, as we all know, He took the bread, and He took the fish and He blessed it and He multiplied it, and He fed 5,000 people.

A little later on. Jesus is going to come to the table at another place in Jerusalem. And again, He's going to take bread, and He's going to break it. And He's going to pass it to His disciples and He's going to feed the disciples with the bread, yes, that they could hold in their hand, but with the spiritual bread, the bread that is His body, we know, was broken for you and for me. And that's the bread that Jesus offers. And that's the bread that isn't going to feed just 5,000 people one day in time, but the bread that's going to feed, that does feed us, in this time and will feed us in the time to come.

So Jesus shows Himself to be the Good Shepherd. He cares about me, and He cares about you. And we are called to care for one another and to protect one another. And my worry about for the future is that people are going to slip through the net, that if we don't have our shepherds, then our people are not going to be cared for and fed and cared for and protected in the right way. Yes, we're all called to be shepherds, and we're all called to live under the authority, ultimately, of the Good Shepherd, who is Jesus Himself. So my fears for the future may have... they're still there. We'll have to wait and see what happens. But Jesus is the Good Shepherd, whatever happens within our church, we still look to Him as the Good Shepherd. And if we look to Him, He will teach us, help us, equip us, and He will care for us and He will protect us. And so we're going to pick up that theme in our next hymn, which is of course *The Lord's My Shepherd*. The disciples came to know that, the 5,000 came to know that, I came to know that, and I pray that you will know that too. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Hymn: Psalm 23 (The Lord's My Shepherd – by Stuart Townend)

1. 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.

Chorus:

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.

2. 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.

Chorus

3. 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.

Chorus

Creed

All 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;
he 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

And now we turn to prayer. Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the gift and the privilege of prayer, the opportunity to offer You our praise, but to bring before You too our needs and our concerns. And we pray for Your Church in the world today, that it might truly be a witness to Your saving love, that the teaching that it proclaims, the life that it commends and models within its own community, might speak to the world round about us of Your saving love.

We pray for the leaders of our Church, for our archbishops and bishops, that Your Spirit might blow forcefully among them, to equip and raise them up as Your true shepherds, following the example of Jesus, to seek to meet the needs of the people entrusted to their care. We pray for all other clergy and people in positions of leadership, that all would seek to model themselves on our Lord Jesus Christ, who came not to be served but to serve and to give Himself. May the pattern of ministry in our Church be one of service, that seeks to recognise and to meet need wherever it finds it.

So, Lord, we pray for our own Church, we pray for the Church in this land. We thank You for the freedoms that we enjoy to proclaim that truth today. But we realise too that those freedoms are under threat from many quarters, that there are those who seek to limit what we can say, or prevents the proclamation of Christian truth. So may we guard that freedom and use it wisely and well, with compassion, with fairness and justice.

And we pray for Your church in the wider world. So many places in our world where to proclaim the name of Jesus is to court persecution and opposition, even many places in the world today to face the likelihood of death. We pray for strength for Your people who face such situations. We pray, above all, that Your Word would break down those barriers, would melt the heart of

those who oppose it, that Your Word can be spoken freely and openly, and people are able to accept it without fear.

Lord, in Your mercy

All Hear our prayer

And we pray for those to whom is committed the responsibility of government and administration. So many difficult and challenging decisions to be made, especially at this time. And it's easy to moan and it's easy to be critical of 'this was wrong' or 'that was a mess'. But Lord, we face difficult times, and we pray for great wisdom for those who have that responsibility of making decisions on our behalf. Guide and lead them. May they, too, follow that same pattern of our Lord Jesus Himself, in true service and self-giving. We pray for our own nation and we pray for the nations of the world, recognising that the conditions of the pandemic are not just within the shores of this land, but across the world, that there will be a concerted effort and willing cooperation to seek to overcome it, to seek to bring fresh hope for the future. Lord, we pray that You would raise up those who are committed to that task, and allow their voices to be heard.

Lord, in Your mercy

All Hear our prayer

And we pray for ourselves and for those around us in our own community. We thank You that You've set us in this place, that we are able to meet with one another, to worship You. We pray that our fellowship might always be open and welcoming, that it might be outward-looking to meet the needs of those around about us, and that we'd not be blind to those needs, or close our doors against them. And may we continue to welcome with that same compassion that was in the heart of our Lord Jesus Himself.

Lord, in Your mercy

All Hear our prayer

And we hold before God all those known to us going through times of difficulty at the moment, those who are sick in body, mind or spirits, those going through times of great anxiety and concern, those whose future prospects for employment and being able to support themselves and their families is doubtful at this time. Lord, may we not just be aware of these things in an abstract sense, but may Your people be open to the possibility of help, of seeking to bring comfort and hope. And we pray for those especially in need, that Your healing touch might indeed rest upon them, to give them fresh hope for the future.

Lord, in Your mercy

All Hear our prayer

And we remember before God those who've gone before us in the way of faith, giving thanks for them, especially those who've been an encouragement and an example to us. And as we remember them we pray too for all who mourn, for many recently bereaved, many bereaved over these last 18 months, and not yet had a chance properly to mourn, to get closure. Lord, we are aware that around about us there is a great deal of pent-up grief and sorrow. And we pray that Your heart may be in the hearts of Your people today, to minister words of comfort, assurance and hope for the future into those darkened lives.

Lord, in Your mercy

All Hear our prayer

And in a moment's quiet, we bring our own particular prayers and petitions before God.

Collect for the 7th Sunday after Trinity

And we draw all these prayers together in the collect for today, the seventh Sunday after Trinity.

Lord of all power and might,
the author and giver of all good things:
graft in our hearts the love of your name,
increase in us true religion,
nourish us with all goodness,
and of your great mercy keep us in the same;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All Amen

The Lord's Prayer

And we continue that drawing our prayers and praises into one and pray as our Saviour Himself taught us, saying:

**All 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 for ever. Amen.**

Hymn: To God be the Glory

As we approach the close of our service, our final hymn, *To God be the Glory*. If you'd like to follow in the [Mission Praise] books, number 708.

1. To God be the glory! great things He has done!
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son;
who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in.

Refrain:

Praise the Lord! praise the Lord! Let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord! praise the Lord! Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father through Jesus the Son:
and give Him the glory! Great things He has done!

2. O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood!
To every believer the promise of God;
the vilest offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Refrain

3. Great things He has taught us, great things He has done,
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
but purer and higher and greater will be
our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see!

Refrain

Blessing

[Andrew:]

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

And may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always.
Amen.

Thank you for worshipping with us this evening.

Go out now and take the light and love of Christ into the world during this coming week. So,

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

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