

Order of Service 25/4/21 Easter 4

Opening verse on screen

'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want' Psalm 23:1

Gathering, Greeting and Call to Worship

Saide

Christ is risen. **He is risen indeed.**

Good morning. Please stand as we welcome the word and the light singing Alleluia.

Alleluia alleluia Alleluia

Alleluia alleluia Alleluia

Elaine and Julia Potter, used with permission

Come let us worship God who is love. Let us breathe in love.

Jesus the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Let us breathe in love.

We are called to be disciples, followers of Jesus. Let us breathe in love.

Come let us worship God who meets us here.

Song

Saide

Let's sing 'Jesus is risen'

Jesus is risen from the grave

1. Jesus is risen from the grave,

Jesus is risen from the grave,

Jesus is risen from the grave.

ALLELUIA

5. Jesus will meet his people . . .

6. Jesus is here in bread and wine . . .

7. Jesus will live for ever . . .

HYMN: [Jesus is risen](#), from [Love from below](#) © Wild Goose Publications.
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Acknowledgement of Country

(Courtney) recorded

The acknowledgement of country is offered by Courtney Rohde on Gureng Gureng country where her family lives. Courtney is currently on camp at Adekate so we thought this would be a lovely way of making a connection with our community there.

We acknowledge and respect
the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation,
the traditional custodians of this land
since time immemorial.

We are learning that the land
is not ours to own, but to look after;
and that if we listen,
we may hear in it the calling of the eternal Spirit.

**Responding to this call, we commit ourselves
to work for justice, reconciliation,
and care of the earth.**

Welcome and Introduction

Saide

Welcome to worship this morning. We are a smaller gathering today with part of our congregation worshipping in the bush at the Adekate campsite. The theme for worship at camp is 'Love, in truth and action' and so we too are focusing on the theme of love. As we listen to Psalm 23 and Jesus speaking from John's gospel about being a gate and a shepherd we are reminded of what love looks like in truth and action.

I'm Saide, filling in for Kirsty, who started preparing the liturgy before becoming unwell. It's a pleasure to welcome Graeme Garrett as our preacher today. And it's a joy to be leading worship with Julie, Peter, Helen, Elaine and the musicians.

Welcome again to worship, here and in your homes. After worship tea & coffee will be offered in the hall. Next week we will be offering food as well.

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Saide

Let us pray

Creator God you spoke your Word of love into the chaos
And life emerged, beautiful, glorious, diverse and abundant.
We are witness to life in the ground we walk on, the trees that shade us,
the birds that sing, animals in all shapes and sizes, strange and wonderful.

Jesus, Risen Christ, you spoke words of love with your disciples
And you created a community of followers who went on to speak of love.
We are witnesses to love shared as we go about our daily lives
as we protest injustice, as we care for the vulnerable.

Jesus, Word of God, crucified and risen, cornerstone of our faith,
You remind us to love one another just as you have loved us.
We are witnesses to the mystery, the wonder, the beauty of love
to the joy of giving, sharing, breathing, blessing and being. Amen

Creator God, Risen Christ, Word of God we confess
that sometimes we feel that love is not enough, will never be enough.
Every day we are witnesses to suffering and despair, to greed and anger.
Forgive us when our hearts quail at the enormity of your calling.
Remind us every day that you once hung on a cross
And yet were raised to new life, freed from a stone to love.
Remind us again and again that we too are free to love. Amen

Declaration of Forgiveness

Saide

Jesus said to his disciples *'For this reason the Father loves me,
because I lay down my life in order to take it up again.'*
We are disciples of Jesus, called to witness to live in truth and action.
We can be confident then that in Christ, through Christ and because of Christ
Our sin is forgiven. **Thanks be to God. Amen**

Song

Saide

Let's rejoice as we sing of God's love and mercy.

God's Mercy (Tune In)

Like the sun upon my skin
I can smile and soak it in
And my wounds begin to heal
That's God's mercy

Like a fragrance in the air
Scent to lighten my despair
Loving kindness always there
That's God's mercy.

*When I'm feeling lost from all that's good
When I'm failing all the good I would
When I fear that all I ever could become lies wasted
When I can't reach out, accept, forgive
When it's hard to change the way I live
When my need for care, for love, to give, are all frustrated*

Like a flower opening wide
Glow of love that spreads inside
Humble gift to breach my pride
That's God's mercy

Loving gaze upon my soul
Seeing all complete and whole
Healing vision to console
That's God's mercy

When I'm feeling . . .

Gentle breath upon my heart
Warm embrace that takes my part
Place of strength from where I start
That's God's mercy
For me, For me, For me.

SONG: [God's mercy](#), by Sheree Anderson, from [Tune In](#), Brunswick UC, Reproduced with permission

Psalm 23

Peter McKinnon

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.

For these words of witness and for Christ the Lord
Thanks be to God

With the Children

Julie McKinnon

Julie McKinnon shared a story about visiting the Melbourne Museum with her grandson Smith and their encounters with strange, wonderful and fearsome creatures including tarantulas. She commented that it is easier to confront your fears when you are standing alongside someone who loves you. Commenting on Psalm 23 Julie concluded affirming that in scary times we can be comforted by know that God is with us.

Song

Saide

God is love

God is love and love is giving,
God gives me the life I have.
The life I have leads me to singing.
Sing that God is love.

SONG: [God is love \(a round\)](#), © Ross Langmead, 1981,
from [On the Road](#), Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE #604502

John 10:1, 6-18

Peter McKinnon

‘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. 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.

‘I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.’

For these words of witness and for Christ the Lord

Thanks be to God

Reflection

Graeme

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul.”

The opening words of Psalm 23. King James Version, of course, which was the version I learnt as a child; and, with that typical vividness of childhood memory, this version still seems to me to have a power unequalled by its modern equivalents.

Some phrases of this famous poem have become part of the repertoire of the English language: “still waters”, “green pastures”, “the valley of the shadow”. But within the collective souls of the people of Israel and the Christian church, the words of this Psalm have taken root at a depth unequalled by any other part of scripture, with the possible exception of the Lord’s Prayer.

These words shape our griefs and carry our sorrows; they bless our joys; and give voice to the cry of the soul for light in a world of darkness. As such they are highly appropriate words to recall on Anzac Day, when we remember the sacrifice and suffering of so many who, in defence of freedom and peace, walked through that valley of the shadow of death.

Psalm 23 speaks the truth about what goes on in our lives: the twists and turns of the journey; the longing for rest and refreshment; the struggle between justice and oppression; the threat and fear of death; the hope that falters and revives. And into the weave of these deep human experiences, the psalm threads equally the truth of God. It *identifies* God. “The Lord is my shepherd.” Of course, this naming of God needs to be balanced with others. God as lion, God as eagle, God as fire. Some of which are much less comforting. But this too is God: the Lord who is shepherd. And without apology or hype, Psalm 23 sets out what this Shepherd God does in the world. God cares, feeds, restores, protects, leads, and dwells with us. God identifies with this world: this world is *my* concern; this world is *my* flock.

This is Yahweh. The Lord who is shepherd. And this naming of God went like an arrow into the very soul of Israel.

Jesus takes up exactly *this* image in our Gospel reading. “*I am* the good shepherd,” he says. No one familiar with the biblical tradition in Jesus’ day could miss the association of *that* claim with *this* Psalm. But in case we *happened* to miss it, John takes great pains to give us another chance, and another chance, to make the connection. We can trace almost every phrase of Psalm 23 somewhere in John’s telling of the story of Jesus.

“The Lord is my shepherd.” Psalm “I am the good Shepherd.” Gospel (10:11).

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.” Psalm. “Whoever enters by me shall be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.” Gospel (10:9).

“He leadeth me beside the still waters.” Psalm. “The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” Gospel (4:14).

“He restoreth my soul.” Psalm. “I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly.” Gospel (10:10).

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me.” Psalm. “My sheep hear my voice. ... I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.” Gospel (10:27-8).

The parallel is un-missable; indeed so clear that when Jesus used this figure of speech, “they did not understand what he was saying to them.” It wasn’t that they didn’t understand the *words*. They knew them as well as we do. The problem was, how can those words – *those* words – apply to this man, Jesus?

“The Lord is my shepherd.” Yes, that I can grasp, even if at times it seems hard to believe. But “*I am* the good shepherd”? Is that saying what it seems to be saying? God is the shepherd. Jesus is the shepherd. Is that an identity claim? If we are in doubt, John intends to clear it up. Look at what this shepherd God does in the world according to the Psalm: God is the pasture finder; the water giver; the restorer of soul; the protector against death. This, says John, is step for step what Jesus does in the world for his people.

It was hard to credit. And in the end this linking of the shepherd God with the shepherd Jesus led to charges of blasphemy and eventually to the cross. ‘The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.’

How can you have Psalm 23 and John 10 in the same scriptures? The early Christians thought long and hard over it. It wasn’t easy to understand, because its implications are almost beyond belief. If the shepherd God has become the shepherd Christ, then the Lord God has taken to Godself the very form and life of the flock he loves and defends. The Good shepherd, the *God-Shepherd*, has become the lamb and dwelt amongst us.

Those early Christians finally worked it out in terms of the Nicene creed we still affirm. Of Jesus it says he is “God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God ... of one being with the Father.” The language is bit abstract perhaps; but it’s exactly what is implied by the heart-felt language of psalm and gospel. “The Lord is my shepherd.” “I am the true shepherd.” Theologically, that is what is at stake.

When I was a kid I always puzzled over one verse of Psalm 23. I couldn't quite get it, as I seemed to be able to get the other stuff. Verse 5. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies;" I could have understood, "thou buildest a fortress around me in the presence of my enemies"; or "thou callest out a powerful army to my rescue in the presence of my enemies". But "thou preparest a *table* before" me in these circumstances. What use is that?

I suppose if hunger is my enemy, a well-laid table is a good defence; if I am thirsty, that running cup would be a protection. But what if my enemies are political violence; ethnic warfare; legal injustice; torture of body or mind? Or, if not in the social realm, what if my enemies are demons of the soul: black depression, deep fear; inconsolable grief; confusion of mind? Won't such enemies simply sweep aside any table, prepared or otherwise, and consume me? I didn't get what the shepherd God was on about here.

But then comes the gospel. Remember when these very enemies gathered around the shepherd Jesus. He sets out for Jerusalem, his reluctant followers, his sheep, tagging along behind. The enemies - political violence, religious bigotry, legal expediency, torture and execution gather about them. And the corresponding demons of the soul assail them: doubt, fear, grief, cowardice, despair, fall like drops of blood on the ground.

In the face of these enemies, what does the shepherd Jesus do?

He prepares a table for them. With the storm breaking outside, he takes bread and breaks it and gives it to them. He takes a cup of wine and shares it with them. "Take, eat, this is my body, for you." In the presence of your enemies take *my* life, my body and blood, into yourself at this table, and those enemies, however formidable, will never be able to do to your life what it seems they threaten to do.

How can Jesus say that? Is the table a match for enemies like that? ... Perhaps, it is. But *only* if we can accept that the shepherd Jesus *is* the shepherd God, and none other. The cross is a terrible *triumph* of those enemies – corrupt power, violence and unjust death – *if* it is not the cross of the Lord God who is shepherd of this world. Without the parallel of Psalm 23 and John 10, the cross of Jesus is simply the crushing of another poor human being, caught in the evils of this fallen world.

But if we *make* the connection between Psalm 23 and John 10 that the gospel makes; if we make the leap that the early church made in its confession, "light from light, true God from true God"; then the cross is something quite different. Then it is not just human violence having its way in the world, as it so often does. Then it is *God* meeting violence against his flock, the flock he has made, and tended, and fed; then it is *God* taking that violence—not just into a human life and human experience—but into God's life and God's experience. "I lay down *my* life for the sheep". And God's life, unlike mine and yours, is not killable, whoever the enemy across the table may be, as the resurrection of Jesus demonstrated so astonishingly.

The season of Easter proclaims this with joy! Alleluia, he is risen!

This table is a table of life, God's life in the face of the enemies of death; this table is the table of peace, God's peace in face of the terrors of war; this table is the table of reconciliation, God's reconciliation in the presence of hatred and division. Here God the shepherd Lord is about God's business in the world.

If that is true: "Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Recorded Music of Psalm 23

Prayers of the People

Helen

Breath is life, and as we breathe and expand our lungs,
we breathe in our God, the Good Shepherd, and the Spirit.

Let us pray.

We open ourselves to you, our Mother, Father, Saviour, Friend, and as we breathe in, fill us with the gifts that come with being a child of God.
Create the space in our lives for your New Commandment, for love, forgiveness, grace, and mercy, so we can be your messengers and your disciples.

Creator God

We pray for unity in our world. We could achieve so much if we work together, to fight the changes in our climate;
to get vaccines to poor countries as well as rich;
to fight prejudice in all its forms, be it colour, gender, race, religion, or age.
Especially today we pray for survivors of all wars and for those who mourn.
We pray for an end to the futility of wars waged by the power hungry and the greedy, so people can live in safety.

Mother and Father God,

we pray for our community, for our families and friends.
Embrace, hold and give comfort, strength and hope
to those who walk through the valley of suffering.
We pray for your Church and for those who search for God throughout the world,
that we are all inspired by your spirit.

Friend and Saviour

We pray for this place and for our people, spread wide today,
that your love and your New Commandment shines through us.
We come for renewal and go out into our lives filled with the breath of God
praying these things in the name of Jesus, our Good Shepherd who walks with us.

Amen

Offering Song

Saide

Let's sing of Jesus commandment to love. If you have brought an offering of money please place it in the bowls near the baptismal font in the Gathering Space. The welcomers will bring the bowl forward at the end of the song.

A new commandment, TiS 699

A new commandment I give unto you
that you love one another as I have loved you,
that you love one another as I have loved you.
by this will others know that you are my disciples
if you have love one for another;
by this will others know that you are my disciples
if you have love one for another.

SONG: [A new commandment](#), from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins *Religious*, PUBLIC DOMAIN

Let us pray

Creator God, Friend and Saviour
Accept these our offerings of love today.
Bless the money that we set aside
the daily rhythm of our living
the times that we step outside our doors
to raise our voices for those who are voiceless
In your name Risen One. Amen.

Notices

Saide

There are always things happening in our community. You can read about them on Facebook, in the Olive Press and on our website. And you can also share them now. Come, line up, take off your mask, say your name and share your news in a sentence or two.

Sending Song

Saide

Lead me on NCYC'07

Though I walk through the valley
Of the shadow of death
I will fear no evil
While I feel your breath
Though I may stumble
And fall in disgrace
Shine your light and lead me on

Chorus (echoes in brackets)

(Lead me on)

Like a child (Lead me on)

Walkin' down (Lead me on)

Through the dark and shadows

Lead (Lead me on)

Lead me on (Lead me on)

Lead me to the other side

Surely goodness and mercy
Shall follow me
And I will live in your house
As long as life can be
Though I may stumble
And fall in disgrace
Shine your light and lead me on

Chorus

SONG: Lead Me On, by Paul Gioia, from NCYC 07 Songbook,
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Blessing and Sending

Saide

Jesus said 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.'
As we go out into the week let us listen for the voice of the shepherd,
so that we might live abundantly in the fullness of God's love and love in truth and action.

In all your living and loving may you know
the wonder of God's steadfast love
the joy of Jesus' call to love one another
and the ever-present breath of love in your hearts,
the gift of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Thank you

'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.' John 10

Liturgists:

Kirsty Bennett
Saide Cameron

Musicians:

Elaine Potter (Coordinator)
Helen Burnham
Michael Cameron
Bronte Potter
Maggie Somerville

The Lord is my Shepherd
*from Bryn Terfel Sings
Favourites*

Psalm 23 Arr. Chris Hazell
London Voices

Acknowledgement of

Country:

(recording)

Courtney Rohde

Pre & Postlude

Recordings:

God's Mercy
Matthew Lees
Jesus is risen
Elaine Potter
Julia Potter
Catherine Leslie

Welcoming:

Julie McKinnon
Peter McKinnon

Bible readings:

Peter McKinnon

Images:

Saide Cameron

With the Children:

Julie McKinnon

Production:

Jane Allardice
Ray Cameron
Saide Cameron
Jason Minator

Reflection:

Graeme Garrett

Prayers of the People:

Helen Burnham

Closing verse on screen

'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.' John 10:11