

Fourth Sunday of Easter (Year B) Sunday 25 April 2021

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME

SHEPHERD

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

The good shepherd (John 10:11-18)

The Sundays of Easter invite us to encounter and to engage with the risen Christ, and to open our eyes to who Jesus is. John's Gospel offers a series of helpful clues in the 'I am' sayings of Jesus. Today's Gospel reading opens with Jesus claiming, 'I am the good shepherd'. The image of the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep to model the relationship between God and the people of God was already well established in the Old Testament as exemplified by Psalm 23. Throughout chapter 10 of his Gospel John develops this image to express who Jesus is.

Our image to stimulate reflection on this passage is *shepherd*.

Core extract from the Gospel (John 10.14-16; for reflection throughout the week)

Jesus said, '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.'

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Risen Lord,
you are the good shepherd
and we are your sheep.
Call your sheep from across the world,
that they may all be united in you,
as one flock with one shepherd;
for time and for eternity.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

John 10.11-18

'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.'

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ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (John 10: 11-18)

Begin exploring John's presentation of Jesus as the good shepherd by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- Why does the good shepherd lay down his life for the sheep?
- What does this passage teach about Jesus' death and resurrection?
- What does this passage say about Jesus' relationship with his sheep?
- What is the meaning of, 'there will be one flock'?
- What does the narrative say to us today?

Using your Bible

Compare John's teaching about the good shepherd with the parables concerning the shepherd in the synoptic Gospels.

- Matthew 18: 12-14
- Luke 15: 3-7

Explore images of shepherds in the Old Testament.

- Psalm 23: 1-6
- Psalm 80: 1-3
- Isaiah 40: 9-11
- Jeremiah 31: 10-12
- Ezekiel 34: 11-23

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Exploring online

Widen your exploration of John's presentation of Jesus as the good shepherd by looking up some of the following themes and others of your choosing.

- Commentaries on the good shepherd
- The good shepherd in stained glass
- I am the good shepherd poems. What do you see in Malcolm Guite's 'I am the door of the sheepfold'?

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on John's presentation of Jesus as the good shepherd is *shepherd*. Draw on your experience of shepherds in real life or on television. For example:

- Have you ever watched a shepherd at work?
- Have you experience of shepherds on television or in films?
- Have you felt that you have acted like a shepherd?

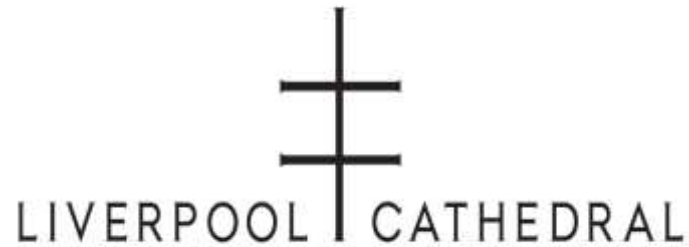
What have you learned about shepherds?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by John's presentation of Jesus as the good shepherd.

- Create a poster of images of Jesus as the good shepherd.
- Create a collage of fields, hills, sheep, and shepherds.
- Make a large model of Jesus the good shepherd.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of Jesus the good shepherd.

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EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

Our invitation then is for you to share your reflections, prayers and photos of your creative work with the Cathedral by emailing them to Nelson.Pike@liverpoolcathedral.org.uk

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales and the St Christopher's College Trust.



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