

Service for Week 20<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> April 2026

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter By Chaplain Andy

### **Our Opening Prayer.**

Loving God, we thank you that in the turmoil of life you are always with us—your love reaching out, your hand supporting us, your forgiving grace giving us strength.

Help us Lord God. to put our trust wholly on you, confident that you will never fail us.

**Amen**

### *The Lord's Prayer*

Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be Thy name,

Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done,

on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive them who trespass  
against us.

And lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom,

the power and the glory

for ever and ever.

**Amen**

### **Bible Reading John 10:1-10**

The Shepherd and His Flock

*Jesus said* - "I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber.

The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."

Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them. Therefore, Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

*Holy words, Holy wisdom,*

***Thanks be to God.***

### **Reflection**

In Mark's gospel we read these words '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.'

This theme of the shepherd and sheep is taken up by Jesus in our verses today from John's gospel. It was a theme used by Jesus because in that agricultural society a shepherd was a very familiar character and everybody knew what care a good shepherd took of their flock of sheep.

Sheep are not known to be particularly bright; and tend to follow the sheep in front of them. But let us not make the mistake of thinking that Jesus is saying that people can be so easily led.

Instead, it has been suggested that it was a subtle criticism of their religious leaders who were failing to lead them in a way that allowed them to have fulfilling lives.

Jesus then further develops his theme by going into the practicalities of being a shepherd, one of which was getting to know them and teaching the sheep to only respond to their voice and not to strangers who have not entered through the gate but climbed over the fence into the pen. But still the people listening to Jesus did not fully understand the analogy.

To make his message clearer to them Jesus then focuses on the gate to the sheep pen. He tells them that he is like the gate for the sheep. If you enter through the 'gate' and have a relationship with God through the life and words of Jesus you will live life to the full. Before Jesus came there were many false prophets but people did not follow them. Jesus said that they are like the strangers whose voice the sheep don't recognize and ignore.

The comparison with the shepherd and the gate to the sheep pen is just an illustration that people could easily understand and connect with. Later in

John's gospel Jesus says 'No one comes to the Father except through me.' Some translations interpret this as "no one comes to the Father but with me," emphasizing companionship rather than just a doorway.

Jesus used the analogy of a gateway to illustrate his message, but all analogies fail at some point. He says 'I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved'. That is the truth but other faiths have their own way of understanding and finding God.

The message that Jesus had for the people listening then and for us now is that if we take Jesus to be our leader and guide then our lives will have purpose and be fulfilling. Through the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus we came to know the truth about God. This enables us to have a relationship with God and we can be assured that at the end of our lives here we will be reunited in spirit with God.

Jesus tells us that our sins are forgiven and says 'I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full.

**Amen**

### **Closing Prayer**

Loving God, one thing I can be sure of is that in Jesus Christ I have met with you, experienced your love and receiving your guidance. May I live in him and he in me. **Amen.**

Prayers inspired by 'Prayfully Yours' by Nick Fawcett