

Finding pasture

Notes on the Bible readings

- Penning the sheep in for the night back in Jesus' time was very different from farming today. Although the sheep would be securely hemmed in by stone walls or similar, there would be a space where, instead of a gate, the shepherd would lie down: to watch his sheep, and to be alert should an enemy seek to attack.

- Once again, the disciples don't seem to understand Jesus' message about being a shepherd, and ask him what he means. Jesus says that not everyone will understand, but we need ears to hear. Listening to Jesus' voice is key to this analogy, as he says that the sheep will not follow the voice of a stranger, but they recognise the voice of the shepherd and will follow him to abundance.

- What does abundance look like to you? In the Early Church, it meant having enough to share, being generous, and ensuring that no one goes without. It meant being with and worshipping alongside each other - and through this, adding to their daily. Abundance is this picture of having enough, with enough to share. How often do we live in that kind of abundance?

Lecto Divina

The aim is to pay attention to which words resonate or strike a chord with you. Read Psalm 23 slowly, with a pause at the end of each verse (read it aloud to yourself; in a group, read verses in turn). Leave a minute of silence after the end, then read it again in the same way. Repeat a third time. Think about words that stood out for you, carry them with you and return to them again and again over the course of the day.

Questions for reflection

- ▶ What feelings does this image evoke in you?
- ▶ When have you experienced 'enough with enough to share'?
- ▶ Does your church offer opportunities for sharing abundance?



A prayer of approach

*We come to you, O God, in penitence for what we have done.
We come to you in anticipation for what you offer to us.
We come to you in hope,
for we know you will give us abundant life. Amen.*

A prayer for others

*Loving God, we pray for those whose lives are empty;
for all who feel alone and unloved;
for those whose lives lack, or have recently lost, purpose.*

*We pray for those whose lives are filled with anger and bitterness;
for those who cannot let go of the past,
and so have little present or future hope in their lives.*

*We pray for those whose lives are filled with anguish and pain;
for those who suffer in the current crisis;
for those who are afraid to go to work because of the risks;
for those who cannot see a way forward.*

*We pray for those who live on the edge;
for those who watch others enjoy life but are unable to join in;
for those who lack faith; and for those whom others ignore.*

*Loving God, in a world that needs a message of life and hope,
may your abundant life fill our world, our church and ourselves,
in the name of Jesus. Amen.*

A personal prayer

*Thank you for abundant life; thank you for your generous love.
Help me to love generously that others may also experience the
abundance of your life. Amen.*

Live your faith

While we all feel that we lack 'abundance' in areas of our lives, the truth can be a little different. Go through your kitchen cupboards or your wardrobe, and choose something to share through a local food bank or charity shop when the opportunity arises.