

## READINGS AND REFLECTION FOR THE 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER

Psalm 23

Acts 2.42-end

John 10.1-10

### Psalm 23

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd; ♦  
therefore can I lack nothing.
  
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures ♦  
and leads me beside still waters.
  
- 3 He shall refresh my soul ♦  
and guide me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
  
- 4 Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil; ♦  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
  
- 5 You spread a table before me  
in the presence of those who trouble me; ♦  
you have anointed my head with oil  
and my cup shall be full.
  
- 6 Surely goodness and loving mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life, ♦  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

**Glory be 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.**

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## **Acts 2.42-47**

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

## **John 10.1-10**

*(Jesus said..)*

'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. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.' 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.'

## **Reflection The Gateway and the Shepherd**

Think of the gateway as a threshold – an in-between place. The pandemic is holding us all on a threshold. This in-between place has taken us away from the familiar world we used to inhabit, while the virus is fought by all the means at our disposal. And we are somehow held here because the world that follows the crisis is not yet able to emerge. Let's pray for those who have to discern a safe pathway, and the right moment. A threshold can be a very uncomfortable and bewildering place. For many it is also a place of fear, of anxiety and loss. And lots of us feel trapped in this in-between place. We long to rush on, across the threshold, through the gateway, and into what is to come next. But our Bible reading today reminds us that our task at the gateway - at the threshold - is not to rush on, but to listen for the voice of the Good Shepherd. It is in him that we find our true Way.

Last autumn, Hannah and I shared in leading a day for the children of Years 5 and 6 at Bicton School. Our theme for the day was Psalm 23, the psalm set for this Sunday. During our time together, we shared different crafts, times of quiet and times of worship. We wanted to share the good news that our Good Shepherd is the one who is with us through the whole journey of life, wherever it takes us. Little did we know last October just how important that message would be. We are never alone. The one who leads us over the threshold and brings us through the gateway will lead us always - yes, on those wonderful days when he makes us lie down in green pastures and brings us beside still waters! But also as we walk through the valley of the shadow. We need fear no evil, his rod and his staff are our comfort. And whatever these days bring, we can cling to those precious words: *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*

You might like to spend some time reflecting on the number of times you have chosen or shared in singing a version of Psalm 23 – it has been part of baptisms, weddings and funerals in our family, somehow holding all of those times for us, the joy and the grief. May the psalm be our prayer in these continuing days - stuck as we are on the threshold between two worlds - and bring us confidence, comfort and grace to persevere through the waiting. For the suffering and grief of this time is not our God's purpose for us.

Jesus summed it up in the final words of today's Gospel reading:  
*I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*

*May our Good Shepherd bless and be with you always ~  
Mary-Lou*