



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

11th April 2021

The paper-version Service

Hallelujah, He is risen – He is risen indeed, Hallelujah!

To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service set out below.



Opening Prayer: Glorious God you demonstrate both the seriousness of sin and the extent of your love and mercy in the cross. Thank you for your kindness and grace to us, help us to receive your forgiveness today. Majestic King you show your incomparable power in the resurrection, help us walk forwards in new life, renewed hope, and your power, to the praise and glory of your name. **Amen**

Song:

*In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground
Firm through the fiercest drought
and storm.*

*What heights of love, what depths of
peace*

*When fears are stilled, when strivings
cease*

My Comforter, my All in All

Here in the love of Christ I stand.

*In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live.*

*There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of
Christ*

*No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.*

Read: John 21:4-19

Commission. *A summary of the talk given by David Bush.*

For such a lovely story, I found preparing for this rather hard work. My difficulty was finding the one thing this passage talking about, and what the author saying about this?

I couldn't find a way to bring together one point out of the first and second halves – the first half – the story of the appearance of Jesus as the disciples were fishing – the second (within that setting) the reinstatement of Peter.

Why are these two parts brought together like this? Writing down a gospel wasn't an easy task before word processors! So, it is a fair assumption that what the author put in was important, and that where they put it in mattered too for the point they wanted to make.

So why tell this story, and why tell it here?

I find an oddity in Chapter 21 – and that is that it comes after Chapter 20 – well I suppose that isn't all that odd! But what is odd is that for all the world Chapter 20 looks like the end of the book.

In Ch 20 we read the story of the empty tomb, and of three appearance by Jesus after his resurrection: to Mary Magdalene, to the disciples together, and to Thomas – the famous



'Doubting Thomas' and then the very last words of Chapter 20. Read verses 30-31. These sort of read like a sign-off don't they?

But then like an addendum comes Chapter 21 – where we read a further resurrection appearance story, and the conversation with Peter.

Scholars think it likely that Chapter 21 was added after the Gospel was completed – but was probably added by John himself. So why – some time on – years maybe go back and add this?

Why add firstly the story about the appearance to the disciples? Now we can quite easily draw a number of thoughts from that part of the passage – that with Jesus gone the disciples have just gone back to their old jobs – the events are over, the discipleship is over, back to work now. Indeed – it seems they did not even recognise Jesus on the shore – had they forgotten so quickly? We could try perhaps to be metaphorical. They hadn't actually gone back to their old jobs; the story was an allegorical parable that they were being 'fishers of men' – the beginning of their

commission and apostles – as evangelists.

Do we think those things are what John was wanting his original readers to ponder and learn from the extra effort of going back and adding a new chapter?

I don't know about you – but to me that is a little too strained - is that really the point of this chapter? I don't see it like that.

I find myself focussing on the second part of the chapter as the key message of John 21. The first half I see as the setting – and it is a wonderful setting! Someone once called it 'The Last Breakfast' – which was brilliant! I see Jesus having – wanting to have – a last breakfast with his friends. It is an act – probably an extravagantly, gloriously, unnecessary act – of community, of love, of social connection.

And this meal together then, is the setting for verses 15-17. I sort of imagine myself in this story alongside, overhearing the conversation with Peter.

We know that Peter denied Jesus three times – and we cannot fail to see the resonance of Jesus asking Peter three times whether he loved Him. Jesus is telling Peter he knows of his failings – and three times he gives Peter that chance to turn around, to 'unsay' what he said before.

And not only does he offer him the chance to 'unsay' it – once it is unsaid, Peter is fully restored – there is no punishment for Peter, there is no demotion, there is no removal of his appointment and position – Jesus re-emphasises Peter's role as the main person he will depend on to care for the community of believers.

Feed my Lambs. Take Care of my Sheep. Feed my Sheep.

This is a call to live out all the missions and vocations, to be a minister for him.

In this late addition to his Gospel, John is telling of the opportunity to turn back, to undo, to be reinstated, specifically by example to Peter, but my takeaway is that by extension to everyone who can say the words Peter says, "You know I love you".

Whatever it is we might have done – however much we have let Him down, it doesn't exclude us from our roles of Feeding and taking care of his Lambs. Jesus will gladly sit and eat with us, have a social chat over breakfast, and ask us again if we love him. And if we do, he won't, and neither should we, question our calling, our mission, or our duty to minister to his flock.

Now that's something it would be worth picking up a pen and spending time and effort adding to a Gospel!

Prayers: Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:4-6)



- Pray for this day, and the coming week.
- Pray for justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, for neighbours, for family and friends.
- Pray for the Church.

Collect: 2nd Sunday of Easter Sunday. Almighty Father, you have given your only Son to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification: grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness that we may always serve you in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**



The Lord's Prayer: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

Blessing: God the Father, by whose love Christ was raised from the dead, open to us who believe the gates of everlasting life. God the Son, who in bursting the grave has won a glorious victory, give us joy as you share the Easter faith. God the Holy Spirit, whom the risen Lord breathed into his disciples, empower you and fill us with Christ's peace. And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

The Notices: We are now holding ticketed and socially distanced services in the building on Sundays at 9.30am. Further information on our website or by ringing our vicar, Howard.

If you know of others who would like to receive this, or you would rather not receive it; or if you find yourself isolated and not able to get neighbours, friends, or family to help, then ring Howard, 01420 563344.

