

**CHRISTCHURCH MARLBOROUGH**  
**SUNDAY 25<sup>th</sup> APRIL AT 10.30am**

**Welcome** to this week's worship, whether you are using this worship sheet or joining in the service at Christchurch on this Fourth Sunday of Easter.

We use this service, knowing that we are coming into the presence of God with the Church family. Let us spend a few moments in quiet, as we prepare ourselves for worship. Maybe light a candle, or gaze in wonder at a flower or at what you can see out the window, knowing that God sees you preparing for worship and focusing on him.

**Call to Worship**

Let the name of the Lord be praised,  
both now and for evermore.

<sup>3</sup>From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets,  
the name of the Lord is to be praised.

Psalm 113: 2-3

**Hymn "O for a thousand tongues to sing!" StF 364**

**Prayer**

O God I give thanks to you this day for your great faithfulness.  
May I match your faithfulness with my own?  
You have sustained me in times of trouble,  
And carried me when I could not bear my own weight.  
Thank you for the gift of your love and grace,  
Shown to us in Jesus Christ.  
I seek to give my life to you in service  
To love others as you have first loved me.  
May I do all these things with the help of the Holy Spirit?  
Amen.

We say the prayer which Jesus taught us,

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.

### **Bible Readings**

#### **Psalm 23**

The Lord is my shepherd  
I shall not want  
He makes me lie down in green pastures  
He leads me beside still waters  
He restores my soul  
He leads me in right places  
For his name's sake  
Even though I walk through the darkest valley  
I fear no evil  
For your rod and your staff—they comfort me  
You prepare a table before me  
In the presence of my enemies  
You anoint my head with oil  
My cup overflows  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
All the days of my life  
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
My whole life long.

#### **1John 3:16-24**

This is how we know what love is: Christ gave his life for us. We too, then, ought to give our lives for our brothers! If a rich person sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against his brother, how can he claim that he loves God? My children, our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action.

This, then, is how we will know that we belong to the truth; this is how we will be confident in God's presence. If our conscience condemns us, we know that God is greater than our conscience and that he knows everything. And so my dear friends, if our conscience does not condemn us, we have courage in God's presence. We receive from him whatever we ask because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. What he commands is that we believe in his son Jesus Christ and love one another just as Christ commanded us. Whoever obeys God's commands lives in union with God

and God lives in union with him. And because of the Spirit that God has given us we know that God lives in union with us.

### **John 10: 7, 8 and 11-15**

So Jesus said again, "I am telling you the truth: I am the gate for the sheep. All others who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.

I am the good shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep. When the hired man who is not a shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees a wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away, so the wolf snatches the sheep and scatters them. The hired man runs away because he is only a hired man and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd. As the Father knows me and I know the Father, in the same way I know my sheep and they know me. And I am willing to die for them".

### **Hymn How sweet the name of Jesus sounds. StF 322**

### **Reflection I am the Good Shepherd.**

On his journeys from town to town Jesus would have observed many shepherds with their flocks. Looking after sheep was very different in Jesus day than it is today. In Jesus's days the shepherd walked in front of the flock and they would follow. Today sheep are driven using dogs and land-rover's and kept enclosed in fields.

What do we know about sheep? There are over twelve references to sheep and shepherds in the bible. They are largely defenseless, easily frightened, and follow each other. They can also be difficult to handle. I have been following Matt Baker on TV where He changed the makeup of his shepherd mother's flock after she had an accident while attending her sheep. She wanted to continue as a shepherd but couldn't manage her very large sheep. The solution was to sell the large sheep and replace them with smaller sheep that are easier to manage. Sheep can also be extremely stubborn as I know from experience. While looking after my daughters horses on the Pennines there were also two sheep who were allowed to roam anywhere on the farm. While I was out they jumped over the gate onto the road in front of a car. Fortunately not causing an accident. On my return a friend said that the sheep ought not to be left free or they could cause an accident. I had a convenient enclosure that I could use so I went to find the sheep. I put a lead on the sheep and expected to lead it to the Enclosure.

'Foolish boy' the sheep had no intention of coming and would have been strangled by the lead first. I finished half carrying and dragging it, gaining a hernia for my effort.

During WW1 a shepherd out with his sheep was stopped by soldiers out looking for food for their regiment. They confiscated the sheep. This deprived the shepherd of his lively hood and treasured sheep. When the soldiers and sheep were far off the shepherd called to his sheep. They immediately turned and ran back to their shepherd leaving the soldiers helplessly trying to stop them.

Sheep need and rely on their shepherd. Jesus said" I am the good shepherd willing to die for my sheep."

When some cattle needed to cross a river that was infested with Piranha a cow was sacrificed up stream which drew the piranha, allowing the herd to cross safely.

The difference is that Jesus died willingly for us to restore us to God. Jesus will lead if we will follow.

The Lord is my shepherd.

Amen.

### **Prayer**

Help us, Lord to wait on you,  
To spend time in your presence, listening to your voice,  
You're prompting and your leading.  
Help us to hear you in our reading of the Bible and devotions,  
In the words of others, in the voices of each other.  
Help us put our trust in you.

As lockdown eases, and people become more mobile, we pray especially for those who are anxious for themselves, and for others. Help us to be sensitive to each other's' needs and those around us as we go into shops and gather with other people.

We pray for those working hard to help and keep people safe in hospitals, care homes, shops, schools, and places of entertainment and hospitality, public transport and on the streets.

We pray for those starting work again and those who have no work to which they can return.

We pray for those who are struggling with loneliness, anxiety, ill health, financial difficulties, grief, unemployment and sadness.

Help us put our trust in you, as we pray for all those known to us and place them in your love and care.  
Help us, Lord to wait on you,  
To spend time in your presence, listening to your voice,  
You're prompting and your leading.  
Help us to hear you in our reading of the Bible and devotions,

In the words of others, in the voices of each other.  
Help us put our trust in you.

Amen

**Hymn Great is thy faithfulness! StF 51**

**Blessing.**

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ  
The love of God  
The fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
Be with us all.  
Amen.**

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