



Worship at Home—25 April 2021

Call to Worship

God of Peace,
who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus,
the great Shepherd of the sheep,
through the blood of an eternal covenant,
make us perfect in goodness
so that we may do Your will;
and create in us what is pleasing to You;
through the same Jesus Christ our lord.

Amen

Prayer of Approach and Confession

Lord Jesus, our Good Shepherd—as a shepherd gathers their flock—so You have gathered us today drawing us in to the shelter of Your flock to feed and refresh us.

Some of us come before You rejoicing, because our path has led us through green pastures and You have filled our cup of happiness to overflowing.

Some of us come before You battered and bruised by life, because our path has led us through dark and frightening valleys and we need to know Your strength restoring our souls.

Some of us, like foolish sheep, come before You ashamed, because we have wandered astray instead of following You and now we come to seek for Your forgiveness.

If we have followed the crowd, doing as others did, forgetting that we are pledged to follow You, then, Good Shepherd, set us right.

If we have chosen to do what we want rather than act out of love for others and have found ourselves in difficulties, then Good Shepherd set us right.

If we have been so preoccupied with other things that we have stopped listening to the voice of the Good Shepherd, then Good Shepherd set us right.

Bring us back from where we have wandered and set our feet on the path that leads to life.

Speak Your word of pardon, Lord and remind us that You said:

“I have come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

May each of us know that we matter to You, however far away we may have strayed.

May we hear Your voice afresh during our service today and draw closer to You before we leave.

May we entrust the week ahead to You

and have the courage to follow You day by day.

For we pray this in Your name. Amen

Scripture Readings

Acts 4:5-14

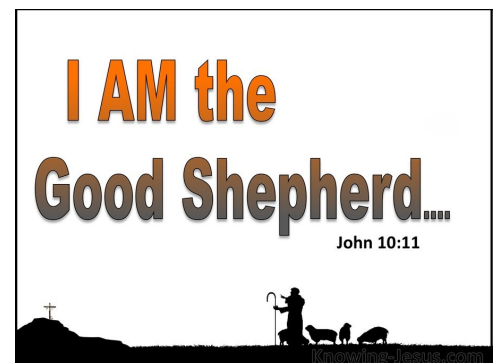
The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, 'By what power or by what name did you do this?' Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders, if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. This Jesus is "the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone." There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.'



When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised that they were un-schooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say.

John 10:11-20

'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.'



At these words the Jews were again divided. Many of them said. "He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?"

Meditation

For centuries, the people of Israel depicted the idea of a good leader as a Shepherd. King David, the author of the Psalms, was known as the 'Shepherd King'. He gave us in Psalm 23 this lovely image of God as a protective shepherd who provides for and leads his sheep.

In John's Gospel, Jesus proclaims He is the Good Shepherd. In both the Old and New Testaments, the image of a Shepherd brings comfort and strength in all circumstances. The shepherd desires to bring all the sheep safely into the fold. He knows the sheep and the sheep know their master's voice. He will go out in search of every last one that gets lost. The Good Shepherd is willing to lay down his life for his sheep.

This description of Christ as a shepherd leader is more than a lovely poetic gem or an appealing metaphor, however. Following on from Jesus' other 'I am' statements in John's Gospel, where he says:

I am the bread of life
I am the way the truth and the Life,
when he claims, "I am the Good Shepherd," he is reaffirming the centrality of who he really is, God's divinely appointed leader, God's son who will lay down his life.

Marmite has been in the news recently. The company that makes it explained that with the closure of pubs there has been a shortage of large jars and insufficient brewers yeast and so production has been stopped. One lover of marmite claimed, "as if lockdown could get any worse." They say of marmite you either love it or hate it.

In a similar vein, it is said that there is one thing all great leaders have in common: that is people either love them or hate them. History tells us this is true of Oliver Cromwell, Winston Churchill . . . more recently we see how many people loved Donald Trump. Those who were not his fans mostly detested everything about him, his politics, his stances on race and climate change, and his attitudes to women and refugees appalled many but, like Marmite, he had many fans. People are divided across the globe in their attitudes towards Putin who is loathed by some and loved by others, and the same could be said of the leaders in our country I am sure.

This was also true to a striking extent of Jesus. People found it impossible to be indifferent to Him. They might accept him and love him or reject him and despise him. They might bless him or curse him, swear by him or swear at him. What they could not do was neglect or ignore him.

In John 10 verse 20 we find that the Pharisees listening to Jesus commented, "He's possessed, he's raving mad." By dismissing Jesus as crazy or mad, they were trying to turn people against him. When we describe someone as being crazy we want people to think they are deluded, disordered, misguided. They have let their imaginations get the better of them, they are living in an unreal world. We should write them off. It is a great way to demean someone and their ideals—as if to say, "They are a lunatic, stark raving mad!".

Jesus was not the first, nor the last whose remarkable and revolutionary ideas got him into hot water. We remember in history that Galileo, the amazing Italian scientist was dismissed as a mad man and excommunicated from the Church for suggesting that the sun and moon did not revolve around a flat earth, but perhaps it was the earth that was round and moving. Now he is hailed as the father of modern astronomy.

We might think of Saint Francis who was considered an idiot because he left a rich merchant's home to care for the poor and for lepers. He became one of the first conservationists writing prayers and songs thanking God for the birds and the air that supported them, for all the creatures in nature and to God for creating them. What a raving hippie! Yet now Saint Francis is credited with bringing the church out of the Dark Ages and renewing the faith for the generations that followed him.

In our modern times we might think of Greta Thunberg, equally loved by some and discredited by others. Whatever you think of her, she speaks her truth about her concerns for the climate and last week, on World Earth Day it is good that some people do want to reduce carbon emissions and safeguard future generations. It is the Quakers initially who coined the term, Speaking Truth to Power. It might take a little madness perhaps. And certainly Jesus, being a man of God, a man who could not speak anything but the truth, the Divine Truth, spoke it whether popular or not.

Behind Jesus' magnetic personality and his divine power to perform miracles, his prophetic teachings were powerfully held convictions and these were the source of his great influence. They were also the cause ultimately of his death. The Pharisees plotted to kill Jesus because each time they came into contact with him, they were confronted with these convictions about him that threatened everything they held dear. And so they told people, "He is mad." "He is out of his right mind."

In the verses from Acts 4 we find the disciples still speaking of Jesus and healing in his name. The Pharisees Ananias and Caiaphas and other members of the High Priesthood are furious to find two uneducated Galileans, Peter and John empowered by the Holy Spirit and speaking boldly of the resurrection of Jesus. Hadn't they put that lunatic to death. How could these disciples threaten their formidable ecclesiastical power, status and wealth?

We may well wonder, was Jesus mad? Was Jesus the one who was insane or was it the Pharisees whose worldview wasn't quite right?

We are the ones who get to choose.

We may be familiar with Jesus' teachings, so familiar that it is easy to forget just how radical and countercultural Jesus' ideas were to appropriate authorities under which he lived.

By the Pharisee's standards, Jesus' behaviour was irregular and disordered. He turned the normal and expected hierarchy of human values upside down. Who, but a mad man, would have taught that God can love penitent sinners as well as good and righteous people. Who in their right mind would teach that God could love Romans and Samaritans as well as Jews. Who in their right mind would show that God can heal the wounded and love the disabled and care for the broken folk, the lepers and not only care for them, but possibly invite these riff raff, excluded folk to the Royal Banquet.

He must have been a madman to say all these things, to take on the might of the Roman aristocracy and Jewish hierarchy by preaching such things as this:

Greatness does not exist in having many servants but in being a servant.

Jesus taught that human need is more important than the Sabbath rules, that justice and compassion were more important to God than religious obligations. Simple things matter to God like giving a cup of water to someone who is thirsty. He said, "blessed are the meek, blessed are those who mourn." . . . We might well begin to think Jesus is actually a little bit mad to challenge the mighty authority of the Jewish

Hierarchy . . . For in their world, selfishness was justified, ostracizing the weak was a sign of being important and well-adjusted. By dismissing Jesus as deranged, the Pharisees felt confident that they were setting the world right again.

But then, in the face of their hatred, came His even more radical teachings about forgiveness. In a world of power and hierarchy where retribution and punishment were expected for those who did not submit, Jesus says, with the wisdom of God, “Blessed are the merciful.” “You have learned the teaching take an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. But I tell you if someone strikes you, turn the other cheek. Do not set yourself against someone who wrongs you. Be good to those who hate you. Love your enemies, pray for your persecutors.” That sounds insane—yes? That isn’t common sense. He must be mad.

Even from the Cross he said, “Father forgive.”

Reverend James Simpson, the author of many lovely books, reminds us how often history gives the verdict on someone’s leadership and influence. He writes, “With the passing of time and the ripening of experience I am driven and many others too, to the conclusion that the convictions of Jesus’ mind are the most important convictions for all humanity in all times.”

He points out that when we look at our world, and all its conflicts, vengeance killings and violence never answers the dispute and never evens the score. We need only think hopefully that the verdict of the George Floyd murder trial might bring an end to some of the racism and gratuitous brutality inflicted by US police on black people. Police take an oath to protect and serve. People across the world feel the need to speak truth to power and to end violence. Violence never bears fruit. Forgiveness, as hard as that may be is the only thing that can break the chain reaction of escalating aggression and resentment. How true when we look at Syria, Israel and Palestine, the recent aggression which is always under the surface in Ireland.

Jesus said many difficult and awkward things. He had a mind that was always drawn to the truth, aside from the cultural authorities and controlling powers of the time. Yet he was a mind, a great mind who saw a way forward for all humanity. Not a mediocre compromise for the situation at hand, but a cure to the entire human condition. A cure provided by a Divine plan. A cure for all of us based upon the love of God.

Here was a mind that saw truly. We might consider Jesus to have been simply a benign and gentle leader of his time. He preached things unheard of Was he insane? Well there is only the verdict of history that can testify to that. There have been so many leaders throughout the history of humanity. We remember them . . . we might revere them. But have their teachings stood the test of time?

Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd. As the passage implies, there will be, in every generation, so called “Shepherds” who are false, who will be hypocritical, corrupt, who will use their power to coerce and manipulate and frighten unsuspecting souls. Jesus is ultimately the model of a Good Shepherd we can count on because he cares desperately and urgently for every sheep, and particularly the lost sheep whom the rest of the world may have rejected. It is this constant shepherding, the care and devotion for each one of us that is the basis of his Divine origin.

What we might suggest that history offers up the verdict on his sanity, in the end of the day, the best proof in the world has to be personal. When we take the time to read the Gospels and we find that the words we read do not belong to long ago but to here and now and we can feel that the Spirit of God is close at hand. Of the many leaders who have come and Gone and whose ideas may or may not have

lasted, it is Jesus whom we worship and in Jesus that we find the peace and the hope and the comfort and joy of the presence of God. In Jesus that we know of a Shepherd who draws us into his eternal love.

Prayer of Intercession

Eternal God,

as Jesus and the early Church cared for those in need,

we pray for all who suffer and are not cared for, or whom care cannot reach.

We pray for the elderly who die alone, the young who are neglected, or cruelly treated, young and old whose weaknesses are exploited and sensitivities abused

We pray for all who have grown hopeless and weary as each day is like the last

For those who face hunger and homelessness with no way out;

refugees from war and violence to whom no-one wants to give a home.

Those whose lives have been wrecked by conflicts they do not understand and cannot affect or change.

Hounded by economic and political forces or by the impact of climate change which take no account of their need.

In this world of so much suffering we pray too for all who are affluent, comfortable, warm and cared for, who do not care.

For those who know what they should do but do not bother.

For those who close their eyes and minds;

and those who simply find other people's troubles and needs a cross they do not wish to bear.

We pray for those who do care—

Those who accept the pain and disturbance that knowledge brings but do not see what they can do.

Those whose consciences are hurt, who want to help, but cannot see how.

We pray for all who do care –

Who are willing to go the extra mile time and again often at cost in so many ways.

For those who go where trouble, pain and poverty are, risking life and limb, facing danger and fear.

Father, as we pray,

increase the depth of love in us and in others who have something to give to the ill, troubled and dying.

Give us such love

that Your sheep, both inside and outside the fold, may be found, given health, strength, food and the ability to enjoy life to the full and the joy to praise You.

We thank You that Jesus is the Good Shepherd and for Your grace and mercy that has made us part of His flock.

Thank you that You watch over Your flock

You know us by name,

You understand what we are like,

You call us to follow and You accompany us along the path, seeking us out when we stray,

keeping a loving eye on what we do.

Lead us into Your future on the adventure of faith, for Jesus' sake.

Amen



Currie Kirk Guild

Officially we ended our session last Tuesday 20 April when we held our Annual General Meeting via zoom.

We had a marvellous turnout of 25 people and, once the official business had been concluded, there was time for a small refreshment and a chat. In addition to thanking Hilary Dinnis who was stepping down from the committee for her help and assistance, I would like to thank all the members who have supported me through this first year of my presidentship.

Although our official meetings have come to an end, there will still be time for Coffee and Chat and the next one will be this coming Tuesday 27 April at 11 am. Please join us. If you are not a Guild member and would like to “meet” with us, send me your email address and I will send you the link. My email is elf.lamont@blueyonder.co.uk

Meanwhile the sun is shining, restrictions are slowly being lifted and second vaccinations are being rolled out so think positively.

Take care of yourselves and look after each other.

Louise Lamont Guild President



Many names have been suggested for our Heron and these will be published next week.

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We have friends willing to listen, shop, walk a dog, fix a garden.

Website: [//www.curriekirk.org/](http://www.curriekirk.org/) or [//www.facebook.com/CurrieKirk/](https://www.facebook.com/CurrieKirk/)

All sermons from Currie Kirk can be found on the Kirk’s website and on YouTube—search Currie Kirk

The Good Shepherd

These resources are designed to help you explore the Bible as a family together at home while we can't go to church. Be as creative as you want to be and enjoy spending time with each other and with God.

Prepare yourself...

The Lord is my good shepherd—and yours.
The Shepherd knows you—and he knows me.
Come and walk with him beside still waters.
Come and have your soul restored.

Thank you, Jesus, that we are your sheep;
that you care for us—awake or asleep;
that you know us as we grow day by day;
and for watching over us in work, rest and
play.

Amen.



Question...

What do shepherds do? What is their job?



A verse to remember...

Psalm 23:1

“The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need.”

Try and learn this verse together. Write it on a piece of card and put it up somewhere you'll see it throughout the week.



Read the Bible...

Today's verses are found in John 10:11-18. You can read them in a Bible or find them [here](#).

Here's another version you could read: <https://www.rootsontheweb.com/media/22266/easter-4-present-the-reading.pdf>.

Or try reading the story with actions. Every time you hear sheep- baa and crawl around. When you hear shepherd – look around and pretend to count sheep. At the word wolf – make ears with your hands and howl!

Talk together...

Sheep can't protect themselves very well, they need a shepherd to care for them. The shepherd protects them from danger and leads them to places where they find food and water. He makes sure the sheep are happy and safe. They follow the shepherd's voice. Jesus says that he is the good shepherd to us.

- ◇ What does "care" look like to you?
- ◇ Is there anyone you care for? How do you care for them, what do you do or say?
- ◇ Does it ever 'cost' anything to care for someone/a group of people?
- ◇ How has/does Jesus demonstrate he is a good shepherd? Did it 'cost' Jesus anything?
- ◇ What communities are you part of eg. Family, school, church, clubs, local area etc.
- ◇ What kind of needs might there be in these places?
- ◇ How do we care for others in our communities?



Play together...

Good shepherd game: Pick one person to be the shepherd. Invite them to take a good look at the sheep (that's everyone else!) then leave the room for a few moments.

While they're out of the room, change something about one or two of the sheep, eg. Put a jumper on back to front, remove a hairband, cross your arms or legs. Invite the shepherd back and see if they can spot the changes in their flock.

You can repeat this game with others having a chance to be the shepherd.

Pray together...

Loving God, thank you for always being with us and for leading us like a shepherd. Thank you that you care for us so much you were willing to die so that we could live. Thank you for giving us everything we need like God you are and we praise you. In Jesus' name, amen.

Make something...

Sheep biscuits. You'll need: a biscuit, mini marshmallows, green icing, raisins or chocolate chips and something to make the legs such as pretzel sticks or chocolate Matchmakers.

Cover the biscuit in icing

Use marshmallows to create a sheep (don't forget to give it a head!)

Give it a raisin/chocolate chip ear and 4 stick legs.

If you have cake decorating pens or writing icing then you could give it a face.

You might want to add a jelly baby shepherd. If you don't have marshmallows use rice krispies or coco pops or even desiccated coconut instead. You could try to make a savory sheep instead using a rice cake/cracker, guacamole and cooked rice? Be creative!



Praise together...



[Reckless love](#)

[The Lord's my shepherd](#)

[God, you're good to me](#)