

New Kilpatrick Church

Podcast

3rd May 2020

John 10:1-10

Welcome

Welcome to this week's podcast. We are still in the wake of Easter yet today's Gospel reading from John takes us to before the events leading up to Easter. We are in one of the 'Very truly, I tell you' stories from John's Gospel.

If you have been creating your worship space, please continue to do so, as we gather today, in our own spaces, yet together as a church community. Welcome.

Introduction

In King George VI's Christmas Broadcast 1939, he said these words:

I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year,
"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied, "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night. And he led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.



Reading

Ezekiel 34:11-16a

For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the

mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak.

Prayer

Loving God,

At a time when people are reaching out to hear a voice they can trust, a voice that provides comfort and security, it is to you we turn in this time of anguish and uncertainty. We are guided by the reassurance that whatever is going on in our lives, you are with us by our side, holding us up in time of sorrow, and encouraging us in time of challenge.

For many, this time of isolation, is a time of loneliness and struggle, a feeling that the gate is firmly closed and there is no way out. There is no reprieve from the life that currently enfolds us and no real hope for the future.

But you invite us in, in to your love, in to your forgiveness, in to your acceptance wherever we are and whatever situation we find ourselves in. You ask us to remember you and follow your teachings so we can live in abundance with you and with each other. And so in this interconnectedness, in our own homes, on our own or with others, we say the Lord's Prayer, as one,

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts;
As we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
The power and the glory,
For ever.
Amen.



Reading

John 10:1–10 from the Message

“Let me set this before you as plainly as I can. If a person climbs over or through the fence of a sheep pen instead of going through the gate, you know he’s up to no good—a sheep rustler! The shepherd walks right up to the gate. The gatekeeper opens the gate to him and the sheep recognize his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he gets them all out, he leads them and they follow because they are familiar with his voice. They won’t follow a stranger’s voice but will scatter because they aren’t used to the sound of it.”



Jesus told this simple story, but they had no idea what he was talking about. So he tried again. “I’ll be explicit, then. I am the Gate for the sheep. All those others are up to no good—sheep stealers, every one of them. But the sheep didn’t listen to them. I am the Gate. Anyone who goes through me will be cared for—will freely go in and out, and find pasture. A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.

Reflection

Jesus’ parables don’t always make sense to us on a first reading, the metaphors and analogies used have to be thought through and deciphered. Even with today’s reading the idea of shepherding is far away from our culture and way of life, here in the UK. However, I did find a blog about a shepherd who works in the Cumbrian fells but he is probably only one of a very small number. A member of a previous congregation I worked with had been a shepherd before he retired and he used to tell stories of life on the hills. They were fascinating.

But this parable about sheep and shepherding is a metaphor for something else. This common life exemplar would be understood by the early Christians and yet you can almost hear the exasperation in the voice as Jesus tells this story about being the gate, and sheep and voices, but they cannot get what that real meaning is. A bit like that perplexed look you may give when you tentatively ask someone to repeat something again and again because you don’t quite follow...

It was probably not supposed to be difficult to understand. This story follows on from Jesus healing a blind man. The man had never seen Jesus before but he nevertheless knew who he was from his voice. And that is the key thing. Someone was being

recognised by hearing their voice and then followed him. The thieves and robbers are not as we understand them to be either. Here, they are the Pharisees, the religious people, trying to keep people on their path, not the way to God which Jesus speaks of. Jesus' way of life sustains and gives abundant life, leading people from the fold, from their old way of living in to the new. Isaiah 43:1, "I have redeemed you; I have called you by name."

We don't have to do anything to be accepted. Jesus gives life abundantly without conditions attached. The Pharisees get a bad name here and they didn't set out to steal, kill, or destroy lives. But by casting out those who weren't welcome we can recognise how that destroys life not sustains and flourishes it. Life and death are stark opposites, whatever does not lead to life, leads to death, and those led away from Jesus, were moving from the light and abundance of life, towards darkness. Jesus' way leads to a new life, transformation, a resurrection of self.

The early Christian document the *didache* writes of the same worldview in its opening lines, "There are two ways, one of life and one of death; and there is a great difference between the two ways." Amen.



Prayer

Gracious God, life seems upside down just now, the sociality of being human has been temporarily cast aside as we now get to grips with a new way of being. The old has gone, transformed into a new and yet, we know this will change again. This experience, this temporary way of living affects everyone. It doesn't exclude but includes everyone from all walks of life, all places of the world, all faiths and none, in different ways.

As we gathered together for this time of worship, wherever we were, whoever we were with, may we remember that we gathered as one, with you God ever present.

Now may we gather with families and friends, grieving for the loss of those closest to them, recognising their pain and sorrow of not been able to be there when needed. May we gather with the ill, in hospital or care homes, and at home, where worry and vulnerability may be intensified without visits from a known face. May we gather with all those who continue to work to enable people to get on with life, and those who work to offer healthcare, support, a friendly voice to those in need.

May we gather with those in difficult home situations, the people at risk from abuse, living in severe poverty, lacking food and basic essentials.
May we gather in new ways to help those in need, to be your outstretched hand and voice so they can be comforted.

And may we recognise, you in their midst, and answer your call to reach out to them, and include them all. Amen.

Epilogue

PASTURE by Andrew King (2014)
(John 10: 1-10)

There is a place we can find, a good place
like quiet meadows where flowers spread,
like green grasses by gentle streams;
a place where the heart feels nourished,
where the mind is hopeful, unhurried,
where the spirit is glad and at peace.
We'll name this place fulfilment,
we'll name it healing and thankfulness,
we'll name this good place pasture
for there we seek to feed.

And there is a voice we can hear that calls us,
a gentle voice, melodious,
a voice like songbirds and laughter,
like a mother comforting her children,
like a shepherd calling his sheep.
We'll name this voice acceptance,
we'll name it mercy and forgiveness,
we'll name it the voice of God's love,
inviting us gently to feed.

It invites us to enter pasture
when we think we're too hurting to listen,
too angry or grieving or fearful
to hear the voice that calls us to peace.

It invites us to enter pasture
when we're sure we're too busy to listen,
too burdened or worried or pressured
to hear the voice that calls us to peace.

It says: Come in and go out and find pasture.
It says: We are safe with the shepherd of all sheep.



It says: Meadows await us, in this moment.
It says: Rest in love. Where you are. Joyfully feed.

Benediction

As we enter another week of lockdown
May we listen out for others
And meet their needs wherever we can.
May we recognise the abundance of life
And serve the waiting world in new ways.
And may the blessing of God the father,
God the son and God the Holy Spirit
be with each one of us
and all those we love,
now and forever more. Amen

Announcements

Thank you for inviting us into your homes today. Thanks to Jeanette who led the service and to Hilary who read. We are back again next week but while we can't meet in church we do meet as church, mainly online at nkchurch.org.uk where you can engage with us all in daily groups, morning prayer, a social enterprise flour initiative, both a food bank and a Malawi appeal and a place to congregate in discussion, spirituality, social life, newsletters, poetry and images. May we meet in our travels together. Take care and stay safe.



New Kilpatrick Parish Church

Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Faith

