



The Church of Scotland

Weekly Worship 25th April 2021

Taking part in today's service:-

Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly, The Church of Scotland

Douglas Galbraith, Candidate in Training for Ministry

Euan Rowe, Colston Milton Parish Church

Matt Sinar, Stonehaven Fetteresso

Rev Christopher Rowe, Colston Milton Parish Church

With music from Scottish Festival Singers, Sanctuary First (St Andrew's Bo'ness) and Resound Worship.

Introduction – The Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly

Is it a little too early in the year to sing "Summer Suns Are Glowing"?

Well, I don't know about where you are, but right here the sky is blue and the sun is indeed glowing. Welcome everybody to our worship service. Can I thank in advance all those who have participated in it, giving of their time, and their talent, and of their faith. And thank you too to those who have done the technical parts bringing it all together. This is the 25th of April, and as of tomorrow, the 26th, we see the next phase of the easing of lockdown restrictions. We are heading in the right direction, aren't we? Things are looking up. Little by little we're getting back something of what we have missed so much in this last year. Some of you will have churches open where you are, others of you perhaps not yet. If that's the case then, please be as patient as you can be. But always remembering that regardless of whether at home or in a church building, or out in the open, we can be at one with God and we can worship God, and that is exactly our intention this morning. So together, let us worship God.

Hymn – 'Halle, halle, hallelujah' - Scottish Festival Singers

Halle, halle, hallelujah

Halle, halle, hallelujah

Halle, halle, hallelujah

Hallelujah! Hallelujah

Oh, God to whom shall we go

You alone have the words of life

Let your words be our prayer and our song we sing



Hallelujah, hallelujah

My sheep hear my voice, says the Lord
When I call them, they follow me
I will lead them to rest by the peaceful streams
Hallelujah, hallelujah

I am the light of the world says the Lord
Walk in the light of life
All who follow my words shall have life indeed
Hallelujah, hallelujah

Now Christ is raised up from death
He will never die again
All who follow his way shall have life in him
Hallelujah, hallelujah

Halle, halle, hallelujah
Halle, halle, hallelujah
Halle, halle, hallelujah
Hallelujah! Hallelujah

Prayer of Approach – Douglas Galbraith, Candidate in Training for Ministry

Let's join together in prayer.

Loving God, although we come together online in different places and at different times, we come together as one, one people, one church, one body, and one flock, united in one God and Father, who is Lord of all, working through all and in all. You have drawn us together and drawn us towards you. As we stumble about in the darkness of our day-to-day, we are drawn towards your light, in our sadness, we are drawn to your joy, in our despair, we are drawn to your hope, angry at the unfairness around us, we are drawn towards your justice. Aware of so much division in our world, we are drawn towards your unity, Father, Son and Spirit. Feeling unworthy, we are drawn towards your love. And as we draw closer to your holiness, we become more aware of our sinfulness.

Forgive us, Father, for the times we have done our own thing rather than seeking to do your thing. Forgive us for our selfish thoughts and actions, and for the hurt and pain that we have caused others. Continue to cleanse us and renew us, make us more like you. In our time of worship just now, draw us deeper into you O Lord, may we know you more, love you more, and praise you more. Show us more of who you are and what you have done so that we can be transformed by being in your presence. Speak to us, challenge us, inspire us, and fill us with your Spirit so that we can know your love and then take your love to the people around us.



We thank you that you know each of us by name, that you know our innermost thoughts and desires, and that you love us all the more. We thank you that there is nothing that can separate us from your love, nothing in the past or in the future, neither death nor life, neither height nor depth, no power can take us out of your care because we belong to you through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us when we pray together to say, our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil, for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Scripture Reading - Euan Rowe, Colston Milton Parish Church

"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. 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, 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 the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."

All Age Talk – Matt Sinar, Stonehaven Fetteresso

In the book of Matthew in chapter 18, Jesus tells a parable about a sheep.

Jesus told a lot of parables. They were just stories that Jesus made up to teach us something. And one of them was the parable of the lost sheep. Perhaps you know it. Jesus said, suppose someone has a hundred sheep, weird. Then suppose one of them gets lost. Hey, where are you going? Hey, come back. Sheep. What would that person do? Just let it go off by itself? No, they leave the other 99 sheep grazing on the hillside and go and look for the lost sheep.

One minute. You lot stay here. Sheep, sheep, sheep. Hey, sheep. There you are, come on, come here. Come on, come back. There you go, okay. Back in the field, good sheep. Now stay. Jesus says, when he finds it, I tell you, he feels far happier over this one sheep than over the 99 that didn't get lost. It's a bit strange. So why do we need to know or care about the priorities of Middle Eastern sheep farmers back in Jesus' day? Well remember, Jesus was just making up this story about the lost sheep to teach us something. So what was he trying to teach us?

Jesus was saying that, he is like that shepherd who goes out to find the lost sheep, and we're all the sheep. We've all been the lost sheep at one point, perhaps we still are, and God is looking to bring us home. Jesus is trying to tell us that there's a party in heaven anytime anyone starts to follow Jesus. So if we're a follower of Jesus, God is celebrating over us. If we're not yet, then God is waiting to celebrate with us when we do, but God cares. God cares about every single one of us, just like that shepherd in the parable that cares about the sheep.



And here in our passage for today, through John 10, Jesus tells everyone that he is that good shepherd. He even says he's willing to give up his own life to save the sheep. And that parable from Matthew 18, the lost sheep, is really important to help us understand what Jesus means here in John 10. In the parable, Jesus doesn't tell us where the shepherd finds the sheep, or what he has to go through to find it and rescue it, he just says that he searches until he finds it. The shepherd leaves the safety of the sheep pen and goes out into the unknown.

If the sheep was attacked by wolves, the shepherd would fight off the wolves. If the sheep was trapped in a ditch, the shepherd would get down into that ditch to help the sheep out. And that's what Jesus did for us. He came into the world with all its good bits and its bad bits. He was tempted just like we're tempted, he suffered real pain just like we do, he lost friends and made friends, celebrated and partied just like we all do. Just like the shepherd in the parable didn't stay in the safety of the sheep pen, Jesus didn't stay up in heaven, he came down to live in the same world that we live in, to go through the same things we go through, and to go before us in every way, showing us how we should live, teaching us how to love others, and leading us on to know God.

So here's our choice then, are we going to listen to his voice, which we can hear in the words of the Bible? Are we going to choose to follow Jesus, our good shepherd? Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for Jesus. We thank you that as we've celebrated over the past few weeks, that he died on the cross, taking the punishment for our sins so that we can be forgiven and made right with you. Thank you that we can be called your friends and your children because of Jesus. Help us to understand that you love each of us just like that good shepherd loves each of his sheep, even being willing to give up his life for us on the cross. In Jesus' name. Amen.

“The Lord’s my Shepherd” – Sanctuary First (St Andrew’s Bo’ness)

The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green; He leadeth me
The quiet waters by

My soul He doth restore again
And me to walk doth make
Within the paths of righteousness
E'en for His own name's sake

Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale
Yet will I fear no ill
For Thou art with me, and Thy rod
And staff me comfort still

My table Thou hast furnished
In presence of my foes
My head Thou dost with oil anoint
And my cup overflows



Goodness and mercy all my life
Shall surely follow me
And in God's house forevermore
My dwelling-place shall be

To Father, Son and Holy Ghost
The God whom we adore
Be glory as it was and is
And shall be evermore

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want

Sermon – Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair and Rev Christopher Rowe, Colston Milton Parish Church

Many years ago now while visiting projects in the developing world, I was asked to preach in the local church on a Sunday morning. I say church, but it was nothing like we would recognise, not a building as such, just a space where people gathered, there was a little cover, but once inside the building nothing at all by way of seats or pews, just piles of bricks and wooden planks, and many people gathered there, many of them sitting on the floor and gathering around as best they could. I decided to preach on the lost sheep, Jesus' parable of the lost sheep. But just before the service was due to start, I was saying this to one of the local ministers, and they said to me, "Do you know that we don't have sheep in this country? And so if you are to talk about the lost sheep, most of the people here will have no idea what you're talking about." So very quickly I had to adapt my message and try to find the truth of what Jesus was conveying in this parable, but to put it in such a way that would resonate with the folks who were going to be listening to my message. The fact of the matter is that we've always got to do that with the biblical narrative, we've got to set it in the context that works for folk. Here I am right now in the beautiful Scottish countryside then, as you see, with some sheep behind me. But how does this parable play out in the streets of our cities, for example? Do we relate to it in exactly the same ways or do we have to find new ways, new illustrations to make it real? I am so thankful to Christopher, one of our Glasgow based ministers. for doing just that for us this week as part of our worship. He takes the well-known passage but he makes it work in his context and in his community. Listen and be challenged.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.

It is sadly not uncommon that lives are taken from people in this world. For many, violence is ever present. Jesus is realistic about the brutality and violence of the world. And he's realistic in his response. Jesus didn't just accept that losing his life was a risk he was prepared to take, a risk that many young men in Scotland face daily just for living in certain areas, or the risk a gang member or drug dealer accepts as an occupational hazard, or even the soldier or police officer who's prepared to risk their life to protect others or complete the mission. For Jesus, a violent death was not a risk, it was a certainty. It was a certainty because Jesus understood the violence of the system, and knew that accepting the violence rather than perpetrating it was the only answer. Jesus knew that his actions would bring him into direct confrontation with the powers that rule the world: political,



economic, religious and spiritual forces, the wolves that threaten the sheep. He knew that they would respond by crucifying him. Being the good shepherd, meant not just discomfort, or self-denial, or the risk of death, it meant certain execution as a rebel nailed to a cross. Jesus chose to lay down his life for the sheep.

There are not many shepherds in Milton, though there are quite a few quad bikes. Nevertheless, there are dedicated people who seek to confront the modern day wolves that prey on the sheep, the violence of injustice and inequality, criminality and bureaucratic indifference, modern day shepherds who seek to protect the weak and who at times pay a heavy price with violence and threats directed against them. It would be nice to offer them a happy answer when they wonder if it's right to continue, nice to guarantee them God's protection. To lay your life down in order to take it up again sounds like cold comfort. Yet this is the answer we have been given, the commandment which has been received from the Father. It's the difference between the hired hand and the good shepherd. It is non-violent love, it is the way of Jesus, and it is the truth. Jesus who has risen and is the life, and who has gone before us back to Galilee.

Prayer of Intercession - The Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly

Shall we bow our heads, and together, shall we pray?

Loving Lord, we pray for people with special difficulties in coping with life right now. And perhaps we are praying for each other.

We pray for people who find small children too much to handle, and for small children subjected to abuse and treated without imagination or love.

We pray for parents harassed by teenagers, and for teenagers harassed by parents.

We pray for people for whom marriage has turned out to be different from what they had hoped.

And we pray for people for whom financial achievement has not created peace of mind.

We pray for people whose hope for retirement has been blighted by ill-health, and for those whose dreams of the future have been blighted by the loss of the one the future was to have been shared with.

We pray for those who turn now in their distress to you, and for those who, in their distress, cannot bear to turn even to you.

We pray for some who are not with us to offer their own prayers, but whose needs we are constrained ourselves to set before you, whose names are now on our lips.

And finally, Lord, hear us as we give you thanks that you have brought us safely through, and that now we have hope for the days coming, all the while knowing that you will continue to be faithful as you always have been.

In Jesus' name, we offer our prayers. Amen,



“There's a love that seeks us” – Resound Worship

There's a love that seeks us
Love that will not leave us
Knows our deepest longing
Drives away our fear
There's a God who holds us
Lovingly enfolds us
We will lack for nothing
Trusting he is near

Our God, you're wonderful
Your love will never fail
Your goodness follows us for all our days

Our God, you're wonderful
Your love forever will be with us

There's a love that guides us
Walks the road beside us
Comforting, providing
Showing us the way
Love will light the darkness
Where the valley's deepest
Lead us through the shadows
To a resting place

Our God, you're wonderful
Your love will never fail
Your goodness follows us for all our days

Our God, you're wonderful
Your love forever will be with us
Forever will be with us
Love that's with us

Blessing – The Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly

Now go in peace, and may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with you all today and forevermore. Amen.