

Notices

Good morning and a very warm welcome to Tyndale this morning, whether you are here with us in person or are online, or indeed a visitor, we hope you will feel at home with us.

Our service today is being taken by our Community Minister Rachel Haig. Rachel, as always, we thank you for leading our service and look forward to sharing this time together.

The notices this week include our Tuesday coffee shop, which is held here in the sanctuary between 10am and 12pm. Do come along and enjoy this time of refreshments and conversation.

On Wednesday night we have time@tyndale here in the sanctuary, with refreshments being served from 7.30pm. The evenings discussion which will start at 8pm, will be based on 'Hope'. Rachel Haig is kindly leading the evening, and you are asked to bring along any verses, music, poems or extracts from books, about Hope.

Our Thursday online Coffee Shop will be taking place too. So, if you would like to catch up with Tyndale folk via zoom, in the comfort of your own home, do log on at 11am this Thursday. The details are on our website.

Nick Parsons is as always, kindly putting together the next edition of The Link. If you have any items you wish to be included, please let Nick have them by today. Thank you.

We gather in the name of Jesus, we gather even though some are present and others are online and others are sharing the words in their homes. We gather because we are called by our names and we are loved. So we offer our worship:

Call to worship

Wanderers, gatherers, home makers, travellers,

We come to Christ

Questioners, adventurers, believers, doubters,

We come to Christ

Workers, menders, seekers, dreamers,

We come to Christ

Hymn

All the wonder that surrounds us
springs from God's care:
all that marvels or confounds us,
raw, rich or rare;
Touch and texture, sights and voices,
nature's countless forms and choices:
all for which the heart rejoices
springs from God's care.

Every creature, every human
lives by God's grace:
Every family, man and woman,
culture and race;
Those whom fortune seems to favour,
those exploited for their labour,
those who need to know a neighbour
live by God's grace.

How can we revere God's goodness
meant for all time?

How ensure that each uniqueness
keeps in its prime?

How can we revere with pleasure
all God gives for life and leisure,
how preserve each earthly treasure
meant for all time?

God has willed that peace and justice
walk hand in hand.
These, with love, shall build foundations
on which we stand:
Love for lover, friend and stranger,
love defying death and danger,
love as first born in a manger –
heaven close at hand.

© 2002 WGRG, Iona Community, Tune: *All through the night, ar hyd y nos*

Response:

Round about us, Here among us,

ALL: God of promise and love.

Good and faithful, Strong in mercy,

ALL: God of promise and love.

Calling our names, Bidding us welcome,

All: God of promise and love.

Opening Prayer

O God our maker, who is with us when the journey of life begins and knows us as we learn to know ourselves, today we thank you for making yourself known to us through Jesus Christ.

Through all the ups and downs of life you have promised to be with us and walk alongside us. So we turn to you again in this time of worship and offer you both our thanks and our profound gratitude for your loving presence with us here now, and in every moment we look for you. You celebrate our triumphs and hold us in our despair and challenge us in our prejudices and failures. So you help us to grow in character and spirit.

We thank you now for Jesus example of life and death and resurrection. For all we learn about sharing life with others, for all we learn about caring and reaching out to others, for all we learn about love for self and others. And for the knowledge of new life and hope in even the most challenging places. For all that has been revealed to us of the wonder of the kingdom of God which we long to see grow and flourish around us.

As we turn to you this morning, bring your forgiveness and peace into our lives, teach us more about your hope, your faithfulness and deepen our understanding of eternity. Draw near to us, and help us to be open to your Spirit. Teach us new things that we've never thought about before, just as you demonstrated your upside down way of looking at the world to all who would listen to you.

Jesus, fill us with joy and peace in believing. Saviour, Redeemer, Friend, Teacher, our all in all. We offer you our love. Amen

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 forever. Amen

Song

1. The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
he makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
his goodness restores my soul.

*And I will trust in you alone,
and I will trust in you alone,
for your endless mercy follows me,
your goodness will lead me home.*

2. He guides my ways in righteousness
and he anoints my head with oil,
and my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on his pure delights.
And I will trust....

3. And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
for you are with me, and your rod and staff
are the comfort I need to know.
And I will trust...

Stuart Townend ©1996 Kingsway's Thankyou Music

Reading [John 10: 1-21](#)

Hymn

When God Almighty came to earth

He took the pain of Jesus' birth,
He took the flight of refugee,
And whispered, "Humbly follow me."

When God Almighty went to work,
Carpenter's sweat he didn't shirk,
Profit and loss he didn't flee,
And whispered, "Humbly follow me."

When God Almighty walked the street,
The critic's curse he had to meet,
The cynic's smile he had to see,
And whispered, "Humbly follow me."

When God Almighty met his folk,
Of peace and truth he boldly spoke
To set the slave and tyrant free,
And whispered, "Humbly follow me."

When God Almighty took his place
To save the sometimes human race,
He took it boldly on a tree,
And whispered, "Humbly follow me."

When God Almighty comes again,
He'll meet us incognito as then;
And though no words may voice his plea,
He'll whisper, "Are you following me?"

©1987 WGRG, Iona Community, Govan, Glasgow G51 3UU, Scotland Tune: O Waly Waly

Sermon John 10 – The Good Shepherd

It was Winter! The very next verse where our reading stopped said, 'It was Winter!' The Winter of our discontent it seems with all the shenanigans in No 10 Downing Street. I've heard so many stories of anger that whilst painful separations were endured, parties were being held. That those who asked us to do our duty, ignored their own advice. That those who said they were looking after us, were really looking after themselves. There was a failure of leadership from those who think they are fit to lead our nation.

I don't know about you, but sometimes I wish it could all just stop for a moment so I could catch my breath; just for a moment feel like I was in control and could say I knew what was going on. But it doesn't happen that way. The faces change but the self-centredness, self- idolatry doesn't.

And when the idea of Shepherds being the ones who led the flock of people was muted in the Old Testament the divide between politics and religion was less clear. Even in Jesus time, the murky world of politics and religion often collaborated for the benefit of the establishment. And Jesus was challenging them, angry on behalf of people who should expect better from those with power over their lives. In the end it's why they killed the Good Shepherd, the one who demonstrated acts of self giving for the ones he led. It was winter too for the one who tried to lead people to salvation, to the kingdom of God.

It feels somewhat wintery with our questions about faith and how over the centuries a changing world has met our Christian belief head on. Different philosopher's have come and gone. Cultures have changed with the rise and fall of empires. In the face of so many changing questions about life, Christian's have tried to make sense of it all and understand God and to answer questions that the changing world threw at them. They were questions that very early Christians had to struggle with if they were going to tell others about who Jesus Christ was and why they were his followers.

The questions that seemed to come up most were about Jesus death. How could God suffer? How could God die? The cross was so difficult to understand.

But it was necessary to be clear on who Jesus was and how his life and death showed God's total involvement with the world, and particularly people's lives. That's what it means for Jesus to be both fully human and fully divine. It shows God's total involvement. God, who cares passionately about the whole earth, and every person, became so involved he was one of us in Jesus Christ. God experienced life in all of its change and development. He also knew what it meant to suffer and die at the bottom of the human heap. God himself suffered the death of a human being so we can never again look dispassionately on inappropriate death. Where people die from things that could be avoided; hunger, curable diseases, drought, war, as the world stands by and watches. God is there.

And I guess that brings us to some of the questions that our faith confronts in our homes and work places, our schools and colleges on our streets even. Questions about suffering, about the loneliness of life. Our faith too must face head on the challenges of our friends and colleagues, even our culture and philosophies. Who is this Jesus? Why are you still talking about Him 2000 years on? Have you stayed still for so long, caught in a time warp?

One of the greatest challenges we face as Christians is to find answers to this in a society that is wrapped up in individualism, self idolatry and materialism, yet so lacking in purpose, and struggling to relate. Where everything is instant, and the language we use doesn't always have any meaning at all. Sometimes sounds are all that's necessary. Can you imagine what the gospel to the Teletubby/Pingu generation sounds like? Or how to prove our brand of religion is worth the cost of living it. Why choose God? Why choose to follow someone who got killed on a cross? What does it mean to follow anyway? Show me how your life is better from following?

Well, our readings today hold a challenge for us. They're not entirely comforting reading for those of us. Jesus wasn't in one of his more generous or polite moods when he decided to talk about 'good shepherds'. Sometimes it seems like he deliberately set out to make himself very unpopular with his own leaders. Here, he was in Jerusalem, and was in hot water over the healing of a blind man. You can read all about it in chapter 9. It wasn't so much that Jesus healed, but he'd done it on the Sabbath, the day of rest. Even healers are allowed one day off a week, it seems! That's a strange view of miracles, isn't it? Jesus broke the law. He made mud and used it to make a blind man see. He made mud and questioned their rules on Sabbath, but at least one man began to see, even if he was the only one. Can you see the hidden meaning that John slips into our thinking?

There's hidden meaning everywhere in John's gospel. Here we think he's talking about a blind man, but really he's pointing out other people's blindness. At first reading there's a simple story about one man who can see again. But really what we hear is the inability of those who are the most religious to see properly. They are the blind ones! Well, it's no wonder they weren't happy! They were so mad that they threw out the healed man. So even a newly seeing man couldn't help them find their way out of their blindness. Which just goes to show, it's not always possible to help some people who are so determined that their way is the right way!

But some began to ask themselves the question on Jesus lips...'Surely we're not blind, are we? That's a brave question for anyone to ask themselves. The moment we think we have the answers and our way is right, we're in danger. Real danger of falling blind to our own prejudices, faults, inadequacies and so much more. Jesus accuses the Pharisee's of having lost sight of God. They'd wrapped themselves up in the law, and lost God in it.

Jesus knew that those listening to him would understand his reference to Ezekiel that condemns the nation's leaders as bad shepherds. He knew that they'd see his accusation of the abuse of power, their exploitation of people, their failure to care for the vulnerable. So he puts them on one side as hired helpers, and the most provocative statement of all becomes his claim, I am the Good shepherd. And what does the Good shepherd do? The Good shepherd would lay down his life for the sheep! The sheep were the priority. The caring and maintenance of the sheep's life was of the utmost importance.

At this point we're a little out of our territory. If we lived in the country we'd still be used to the ways of sheep. If we lived in the country we'd have more idea what a shepherd did. But we don't. But imagine Jesus' listeners and their excitement, their general nodding all round as into their minds flitted the everyday pictures of shepherds herding their flocks, seeking out the best pastures, walking ahead calling to their sheep, showing the way. Jesus uses this well known, and understandable image to say, "I am going to show you God. If you look, you will see God.

So Jesus takes their blindness to who God is and makes it visible in his words and actions. And he begins where? He starts from the idea that the sheep, the people, are loved and protected, cared for by God. Like a shepherd that cares for his sheep. Interested in their food and water, their health, their safety, whether they fall down and can't get up, whether they're safe from wild animals that would eat them up?

Are they sheltered in the worst weather and close enough to hear the Shepherd's voice when he calls, so they don't wander away and get lost. Each one numbered and named.

This wasn't a tyrant God, demanding their sacrifices and rejecting them for the slightest impurity. This wasn't a God mirrored on the Roman Caesar who left depots in charge to make sure his law was carried out and taxes paid, who punished the poorest and excluded the sick, and made helping and caring for others a sin.

I wonder how many people still hold that image of God in their minds? Wouldn't it be terrible if we were blinded to who God is because we'd been taught that doing the right things and trying to live up to Christian standards made God into the great Rulebook holder? If you break the rules you're a failure, if you disobey, you can't come in, if you don't do this but you do do that, you're damned for eternity. And that's a long, long time!

Of course, it's been said in many different forms before. Not always so stark. Sometimes much more subtly. Perhaps just leaving us with the constant feeling of not being good enough, or never being able to get it right. Perhaps never really understanding forgiveness so always feeling like a terrible sinner. It leaves some people feeling afraid, fearful. They'll never make it. It's easier to give up or actually people have just chosen they won't be with that kind of God. Life's better without that hanging over you all the time. And to be honest, I think they're right.

But the Good shepherd is different. Jesus begins to bring people back to a God who cares for them, loves them. The starting place is love for them. I'm not saying that the things we do don't matter. I'm not saying that there aren't things in us which we'd be better off without or not doing. Certainly there are things to say sorry for and there are things that God requires of us, too. But the starting place is love, not failure. The beginning of knowing God is his gracious reaching out to us in love. Not so we can be smacked and put back in line, but so we can be cared for and protected, and that may mean sometimes from ourselves, and helped through this difficult and dying world. The emphasis is on being accepted, not our rejection. God reaches out to us, calling our names. Not holding us at arm's length in disgust, and ticking our numbers off on the role.

When Jesus talks about the shepherd laying down his life for the sheep, we see this principle of love at its most amazing work of salvation. For the sake of the sheep, the shepherd will risk all. In order to care for the sheep, the shepherd would give his life. And so Jesus gave his life for us. The cross of Jesus tells us the ultimate limits to which God would go to have us hear him call our name. There were no limits!

And the Good shepherd calls to us today. Here is one who will not lead us astray, or do the opposite of what he says. Who chooses to be by our side in the dark valley as well as when we are blind to our own weaknesses and needs. Who leads us to the places of calm and peace. Who willingly laid down his life so that we could know that there's more to death and just an ending, always there is new life growing in the depths. Winter gives way to Spring. Dark will give way to light. Love will be the answer!

Video Reflection [Be Still my soul](#)

Prayers for the world

We turn to you, our maker, and our Saviour, the one who is like a Good Shepherd.

In the middle of the busyness of life, you call to us and invites us to see the world as you see it, to love the world as you love it.

We confess that we aren't so good at that. We are used to consuming it, taking, using.

We confess that our world is obsessed with its own needs and desires and it's hard to escape that. So we turn to you and ask for your help, your grace, your mercy.

When work and leisure, joy and sorrow make us close our eyes to you, you call us to look beyond and see with your eyes and as we look we see:

Those in our Nightshelter, seeking a permanent home, a job, a way ahead – we pray for them today.

We pray for the Volunteers too, that you will bless them for the kindness, compassion, generosity and wisdom they offer on your behalf. May the shelter be a safe space in these dark days.

With your eyes we see the turmoil of leadership in the highest places, lack of integrity, lack of care, lack of truth – they are just lacking and there is anger, mistrust, self promotion, betrayal, deep distress and anguish – we pray for our political leaders, those who lost loved ones to Covid and our nation today.

We see the exhaustion and stress in our GP Surgeries, Care Homes and Hospitals, in emergency workers and public sector. We see the ongoing pressures in Schools and Colleges to support and educate our children and young people in the midst of rising cases of Omicron. We pray for them today. We see rising numbers of people going to the food banks for help and worrying about the rising costs of living, rising energy costs, higher national insurance contributions. We pray for generosity for those who have and help for those who have not today.

Through all the living world, through seasons' change, through wind and weather, you call us to pray and seek your kingdom of peace and justice.

Through human creativity, through all our skills as makers and shapers, and through everything we build we echo your creative power. Help us to reflect your likeness and give us a sense of your purpose for us. We pause a moment to offer you our hearts and invite you to call us once more towards you.

We offer these prayers and all that our hearts hold, in the name of Jesus, the Good Shepherd who cares for his sheep Amen.

Words of Offering

We pause in this moment to recognise the gifts we each bring to our common life, for our money, time and talents offered for the building of God's Kingdom through Tyndale and beyond.

So we share the grace with each other:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.

Hymn

I will sing the wondrous story

Of the Christ who died for me;
How He left the realms of glory
For the cross on Calvary.
Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me;
Sing it with the saints in glory,
Gathered by the crystal sea.

I was lost but Jesus found me,
Found the sheep that went astray;
Raised me up and gently led me
Back into the narrow way.
Days of darkness still may meet me;
Sorrow's paths I oft may tread,
But his presence still is with me,
By His guiding hand I'm led.

He will keep me till the river
Rolls its waters at my feet,
Then He'll bear me safely over,
Made by grace for glory meet.
Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me;
Sing it with the saints in glory,
Gathered by the crystal sea.

Francis Rawley (1854–1952)

Tune: Hyfrydol

Response:

Today and tomorrow
In time and eternity
Your Kingdom come

In our world, in our streets,
In our homes and communities,
Your Kingdom come

In our lives, in our loves,
In our hopes and our travelling
Your Kingdom come

Blessing The blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you and remain with you always.